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Characteristics of Farm Families in Kingsbury County as Related to Tenure and Relief Status

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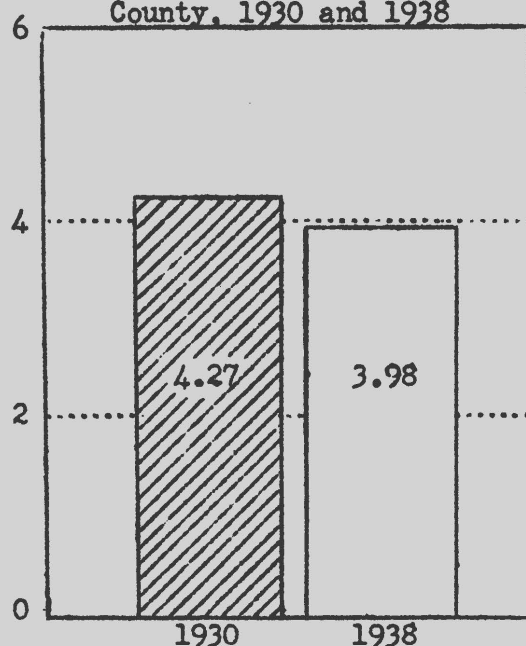
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CHARACTERISTICS OF FARM FAMILIES
in
Kingsbury County as Related
to
Tenure and Relief Status

W. F. Kumlien
Vera Woolbert
C. Scandrette

Median Size of Farm Families in Kingsbury
County, 1930 and 1938



Source: U. S. Census and 1938 Social Survey

Between 1930 and 1938 the median size farm family in Kingsbury county declined from 4.27 to 3.98 persons—a shrinkage of a third of a person. This reduction in family size has been largely brought about by the drop in the birth rate which occurred during and prior to this period. Between 1920, when the definite decline in birth rate commenced, and 1938 the number of births per 1000 of the population decreased from 26.8 to 17.

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Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, Brookings, South Dakota

EXPLANATORY NOTE

During 1938 certain social and economic information was secured for each farm operator in Kingsbury county. This information was entered on a standardized schedule designated as form SS-1-A. For families who had applied for Farm Security grants, this information was secured from grant applications on file in the local Farm Security office. For families who had not applied for Farm Security assistance this information was secured from a variety of sources including: assessors' listing sheets in the Auditors office; birth records in the Clerk of Courts office; school census and teachers reports in the Superintendent of Schools office; and public assistance information in the Social Security office. This pamphlet is the third in a series of three to be based on the material tabulated from the SS-1-A schedules. The two proceeding pamphlets are "The Problem of Over-Churched and Unchurched Areas in Kingsbury County," Rural Sociology Pamphlet No. 25 and "The Problem of Population Adjustments in Kingsbury County," Rural Sociology Pamphlet No. 27. Throughout this pamphlet certain measurable characteristics of Kingsbury county farm families—such as size of families, length of residence, age distribution, etc,—are related to relief and tenure status. The purpose of this pamphlet is to supply the county planning committee and other interested persons with significant social data regarding farm families in Kingsbury county.

* * * * *

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

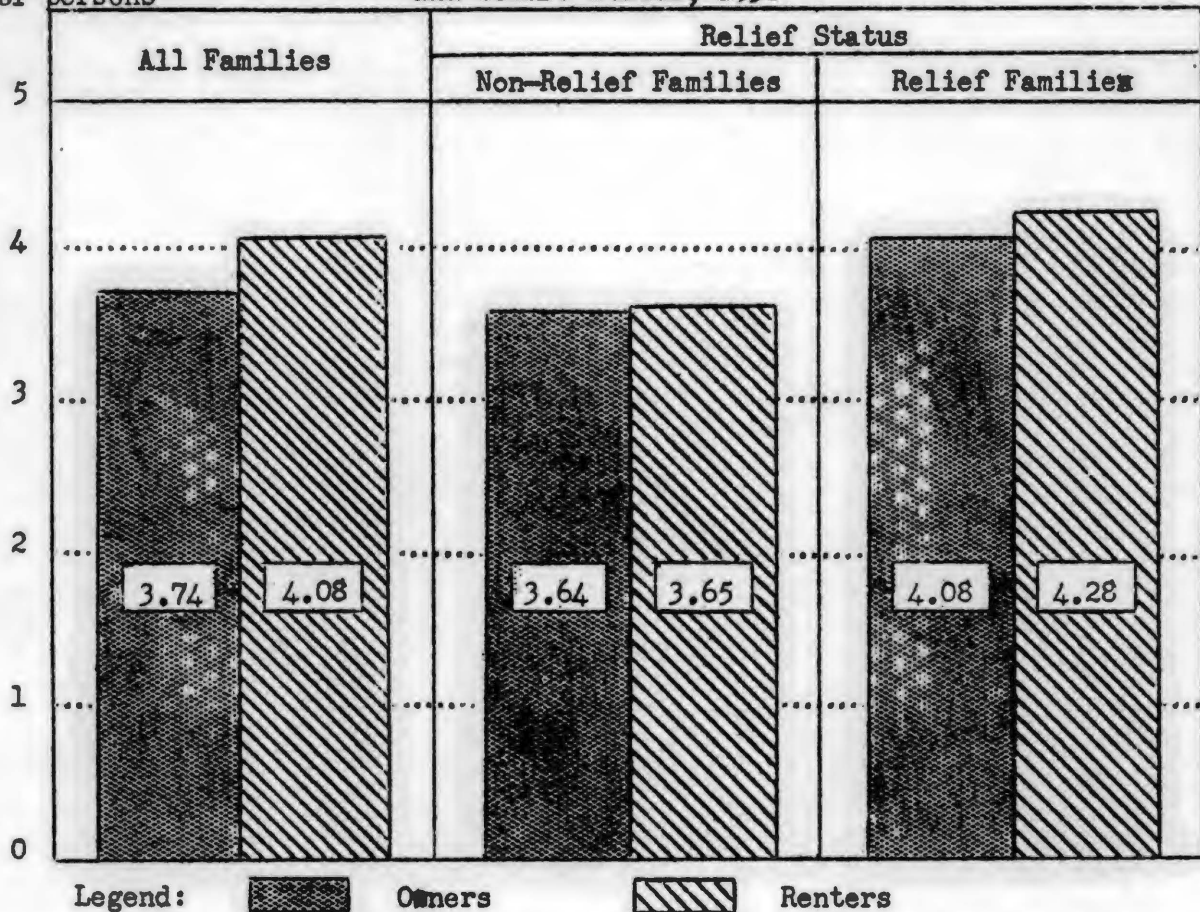
This study was made possible through the cooperation of the State Work Projects Administration and the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station. The project is officially designated as W.P.A. Project No. 665-74-3-143. The authors wish to acknowledge their indebtedness to all of the county offices mentioned in the explanatory note.

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Figure 1. Median Size of Farm Families in Kingsbury County, by Relief and Tenure Status, 1938



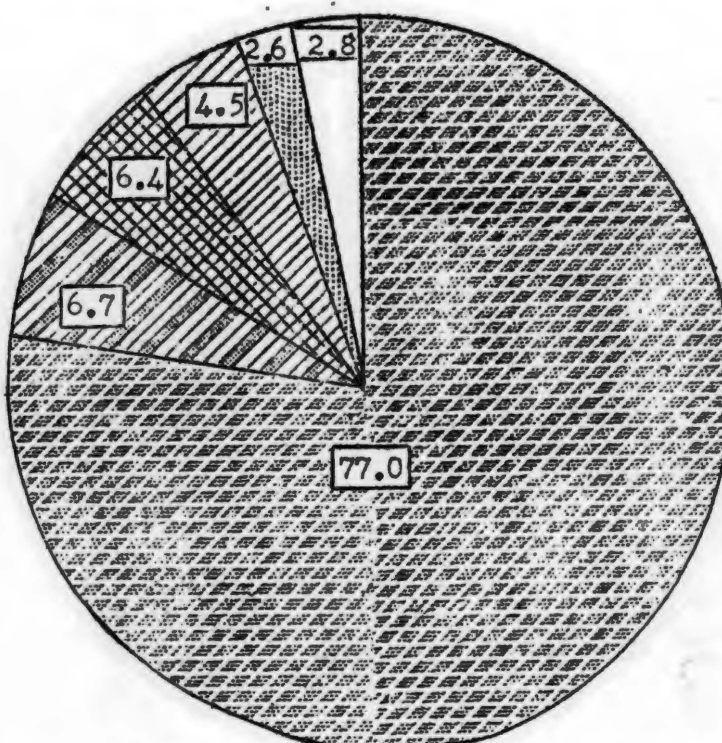
Source: Applications for Farm Security Grants and other county records.

It is noteworthy that the median size of non-relief families for owners and tenants alike is smaller than for relief families. In the non-relief group the size of owner and tenant families is substantially the same, the median size being 3.64 for the owners and 3.65 for the tenants. The median size of the relief families was 4.08 for the owners and 4.28 for the tenants. It is of significance in this connection to note that the tenants comprised 85 percent of this group. The fact that the median size of relief families was larger than the non-relief for both owners and tenants indicates that the necessarily heavier expenditures make it more difficult for large families to avoid relief dependency than small families.







Several explanations may be advanced for the greater dependency of the tenant group. As this group as a whole is younger it has had less time in which to acquire adequate reserves and has accumulated less property on which to borrow for living expenses. Also, the average farm unit for the tenant was smaller than for the owner group; consequently, the gross income was smaller.

The median size of all farm families in Kingsbury county during 1938 was 3.98 persons as compared with 4.27 persons in 1930, a shrinkage of almost a third of a person during the eight year period. Comparison of owner and tenant families reveals that the tenant families were larger by a third of a person than the owner families, the median size for the owners being 3.74 persons as compared with 4.08 for the tenants. This difference in size of owner and tenant families may be largely attributed to the fact that the tenants are a younger group and consequently, a smaller proportion of their children are old enough to have left home. Consequently the tenants, as a group, had a larger number of dependents to support.

Figure 2. Types of Households in the Kingsbury County Farm Population, 1938



Legend:

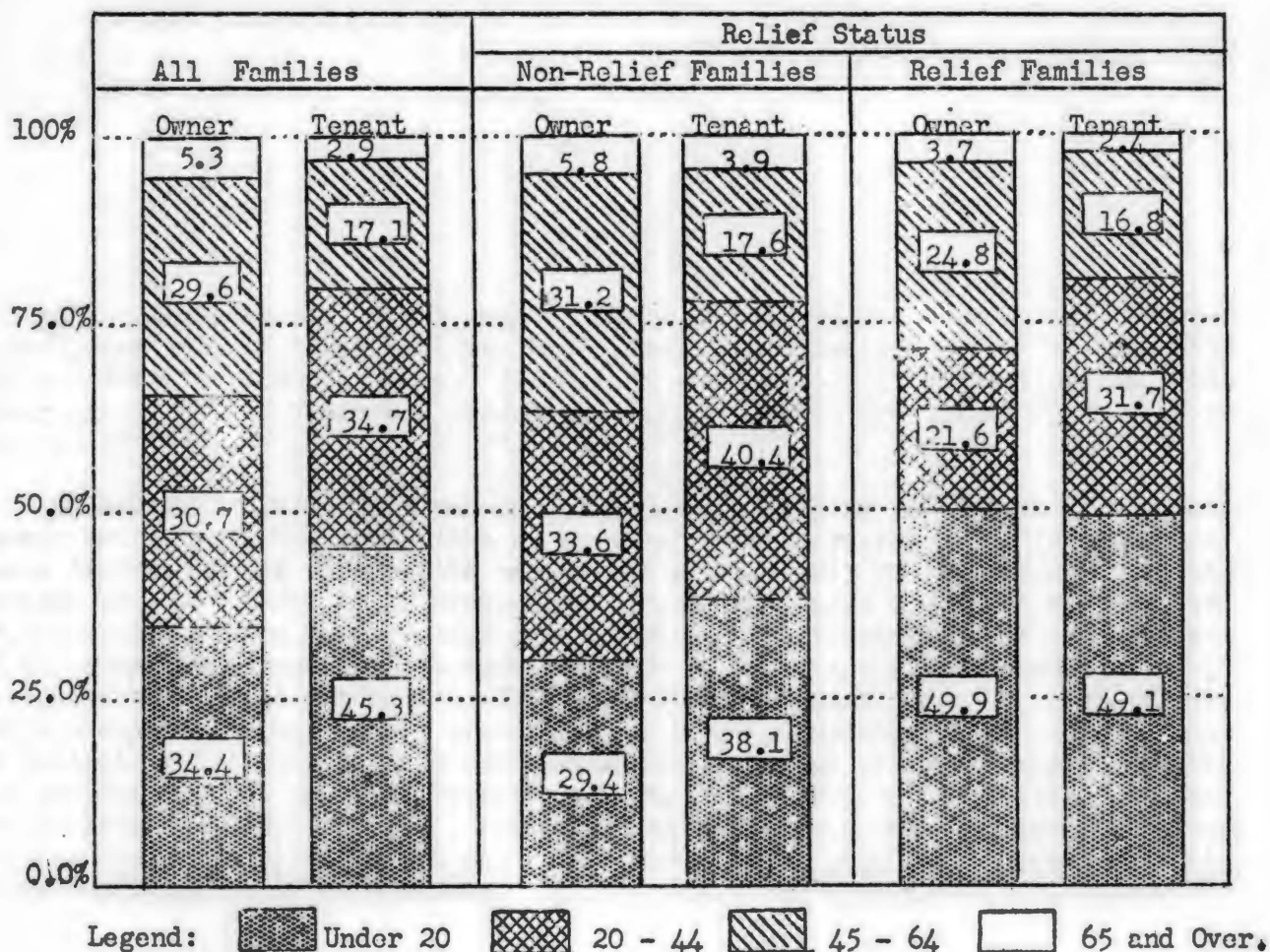
| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--|---------------|
|  | Normal Family |  | Single Person |
|  | Single Person and Other Adults |  | Broken Family |
|  | Normal Family and Other Persons |  | Others |

Source: Applications for Farm Security grants, supplemented by data from county offices.

In 1938 over three-fourths (993) of the 1,290 farm households in Kingsbury county were normal families consisting of husband and wife, or husband, wife and children. Nearly seven percent (87 households) consisted of two or more single persons. Many of the households in this category consisted of two brothers, or a brother and a sister. Approximately the same proportion of households (6.4 percent) consisted of husband, wife, children and some other person or persons. In many cases the other person in the household was a hired girl or a hired man.

Four and five tenths percent of the households (58) consisted of single persons living alone, while 2.6 percent were broken families--families in which one or both of the parents were absent from the home on account of death, divorce or desertion. One and six-tenths percent of all households (20) consisted of two or more families--frequently the parental family and the family of a married son or daughter. It is interesting to note that 2.9 percent of the owner households were composed of more than one family, whereas only 0.9 percent of the tenant households were of that type. One percent of the households (8) consisted of a broken family and other persons while only 0.2 percent (3) consisted of a normal family and a broken family.

Figure 3. Age Distribution of the Kingsbury County Farm Population by Tenure and Relief Status, 1938.

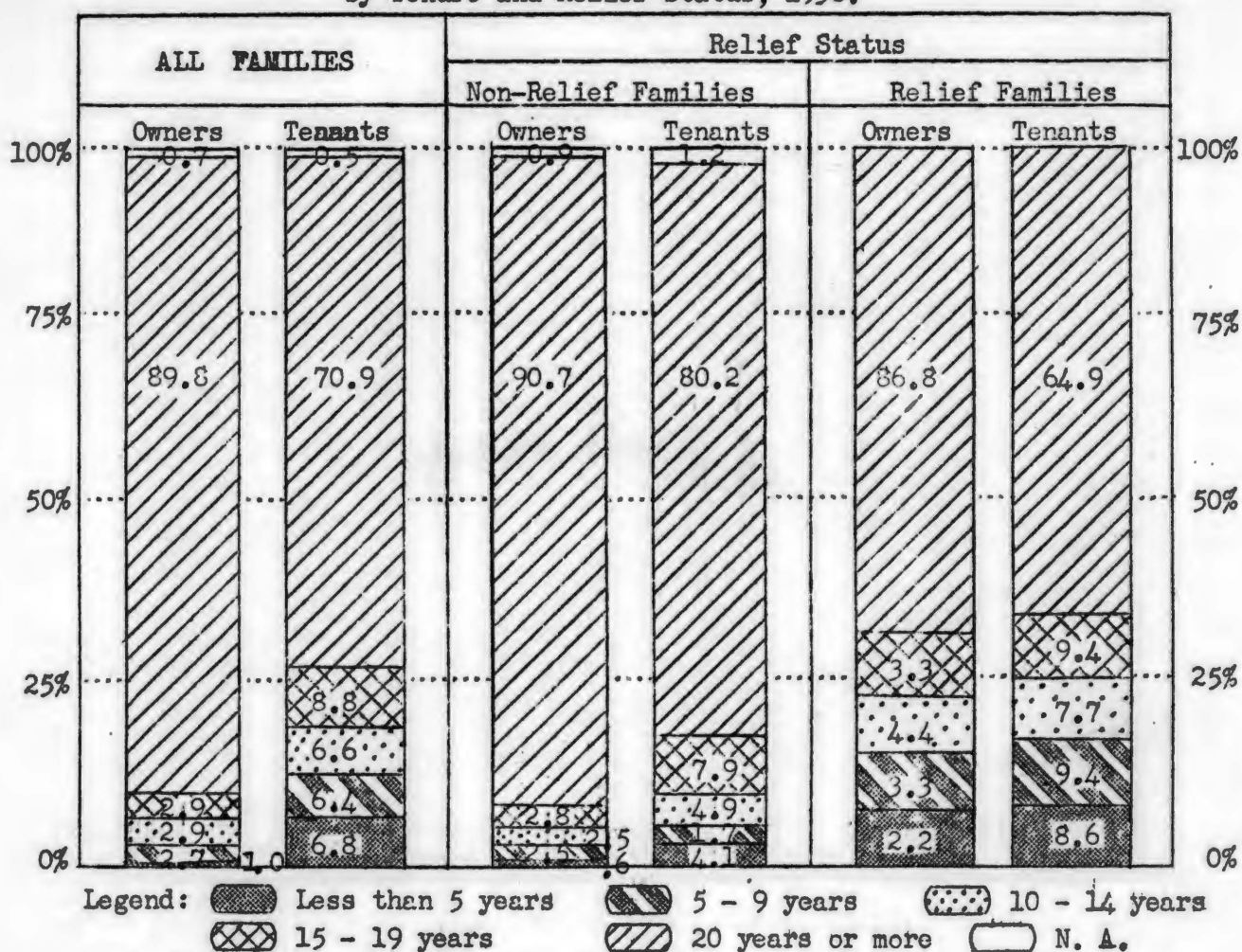


Source: Applications for Farm Security Administration grants and other county records.

The chart above indicates that a considerably larger proportion of the members of the tenant than of the owner households are under 20 years of age. Forty-five and three-tenths percent of the persons in the tenant households were under 20 years of age as compared with only 34.4 percent for the owners. As a group the tenant household heads are considerably younger than the owner heads and consequently have a larger number of young children. As the owners are an older group many of their children had passed their twentieth birthday in 1938 and had left the parental home. It will be noted that the proportion in the older age group (65 years and above) is nearly twice as great in the owner as in the tenant group.

In comparing relief and non-relief groups it will be noted that for both owners and tenants the proportion of persons below 20 years of age in the relief group is much higher than in the non-relief group. Only 29.4 percent of the persons in the non-relief owner group were under 20 years of age as compared with 49.9 percent for the owner relief group. Thirty-eight and one-tenth percent of the non-relief tenant group were under 20 years of age as compared with 49.1 percent for the relief tenants. The disparity of persons under 20 years of age for the relief and non-relief groups may be largely explained by the fact that 85 percent of the relief group are tenants which as has previously been pointed out are younger and have a larger proportion of children who are still at home. The records show that the small proportion of owners who have received relief are, for the most part, younger owners; consequently, they also have a comparatively large number of children at home.

Figure 4. Length of Residence in Kingsbury County of Farm Household Heads, by Tenure and Relief Status, 1938.

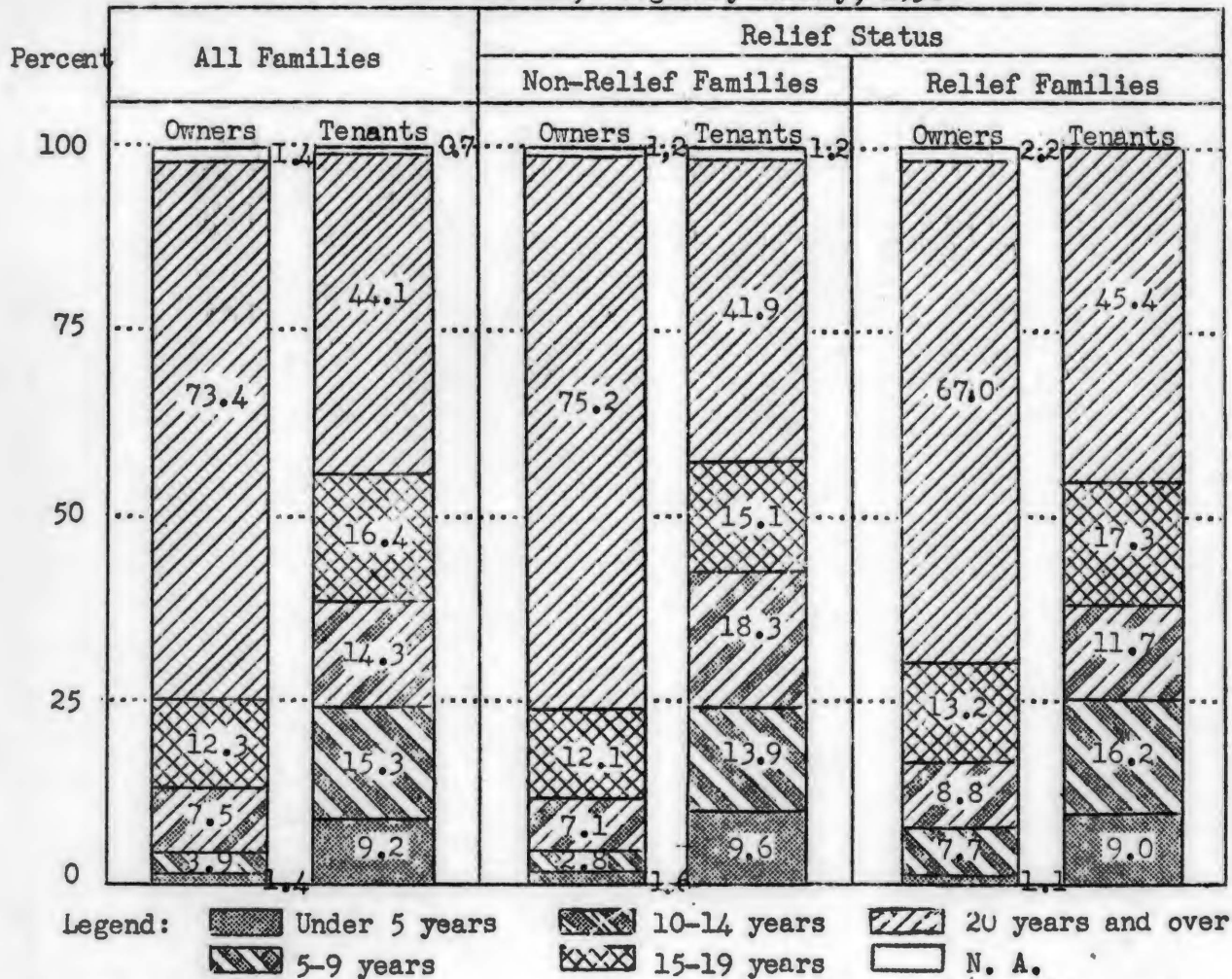


Source: Applications for Farm Security Administration grants and other county records.

In 1938, well over three-fourths of all farm families in Kingsbury county had lived in the county 20 years or more. Nearly nine-tenths of the owners (89.8 percent) had lived in the county this length of time as compared to only 70.9 percent of the tenants. The same disparity, to an increased extent, exists between the owner and tenant family heads with respect to years of farming experience. In view of the fact that it is usually necessary for a farmer to spend a number of years as a tenant before acquiring sufficient reserves to purchase a farm of his own, this difference in length of farming experience and length of residence is to be expected.

A comparison of the relief and non-relief groups reveals that for both owners and tenants a smaller proportion of the relief group had been residents of the county for 20 years or more. Slightly more than 85 percent of the non-relief group had resided in the county more than 20 years, whereas, only 68.1 percent of the relief group had been in the county as long a time. This indicates that length of residence is a factor in economic stability. It is interesting to note that none of the farm owners who escaped relief rolls had resided in the county less than five years. Only one percent of all farm owners in Kingsbury county had resided in the county less than five years as compared with nearly 7 percent of the tenants.

Figure 5. Years of Farming Experience of Household Heads by Tenure and Relief Status, Kingsbury County, 1938

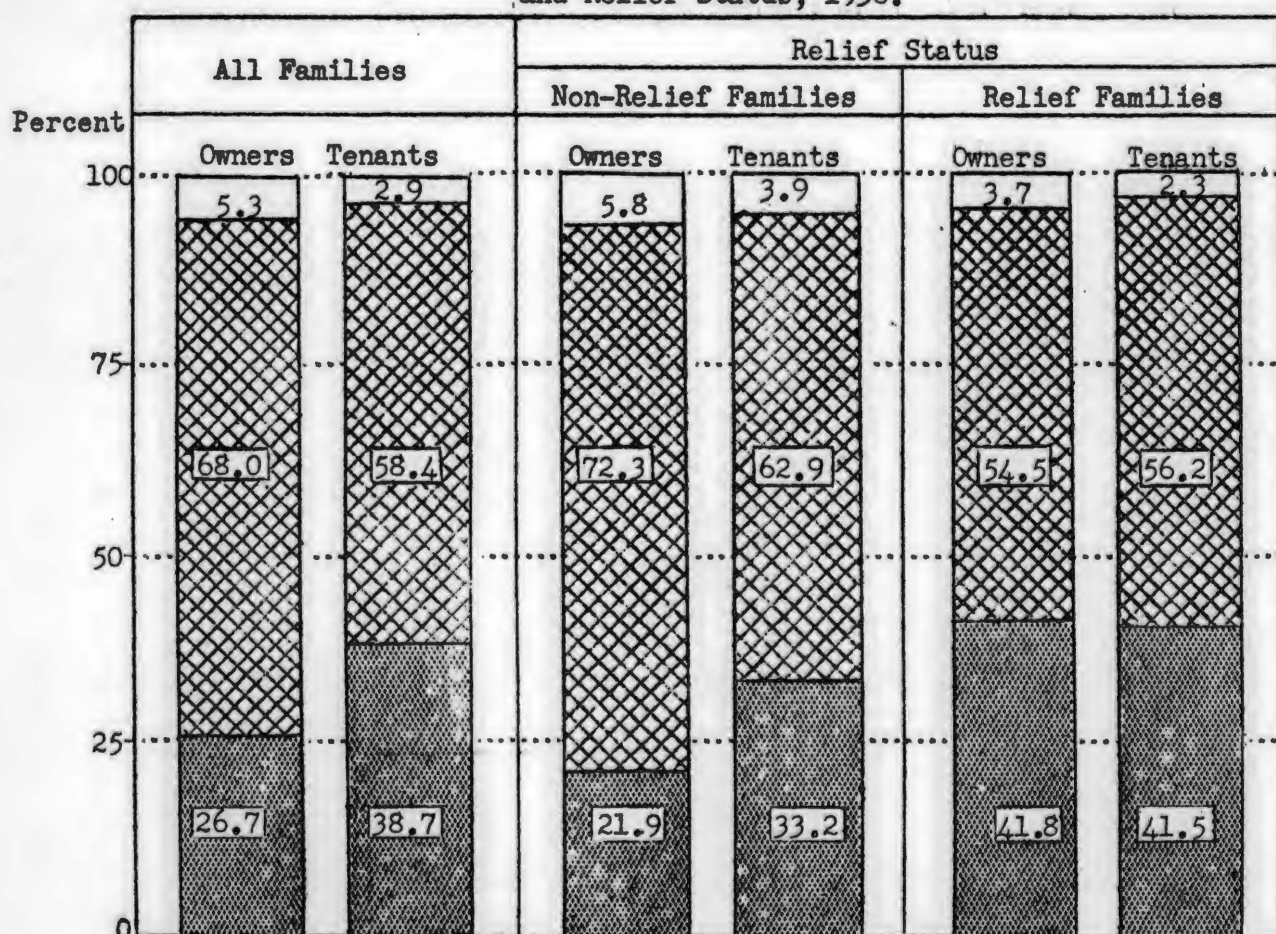


Source: Applications for Farm Security Administration grants and other county records.

The above chart indicates a rather definite relationship between tenure status and length of farming experience. Slightly more than half (53.4 percent) of all farm household heads in Kingsbury county had farmed 20 years or more in 1938. Nearly three-fourths (73.4 percent) of the farm owners of Kingsbury county had farmed for 20 years or more whereas less than half (44.1 percent) of the tenants had farmed for as long a period. Since it normally requires a number of years for a farm renter to acquire ownership status it is not surprising to find that a larger proportion of owners than tenants have farmed for 20 years or more. Only 1.4 percent of the farm owners had farmed less than five years, whereas 9.2 percent of the tenants had farmed for that short a period.

It will be noted that the proportion of owners and tenants who had farmed 20 years or more was substantially the same in the non-relief and relief groups as in the total group. The most significant variation is that which exists between relief owners and non-relief owners. Only 67 percent of the owners who had accepted relief had had 20 or more years of farming experience, whereas over 75 percent of the non-relief owners had been engaged in agriculture for that number of years. Eight and eight-tenths percent of the relief owners had had less than 10 years of farming experience, as compared to only 4.4 percent of the non-relief owners.

Figure 6. Persons of Working Age in Kingsbury County Farm Families by Tenure and Relief Status, 1938.



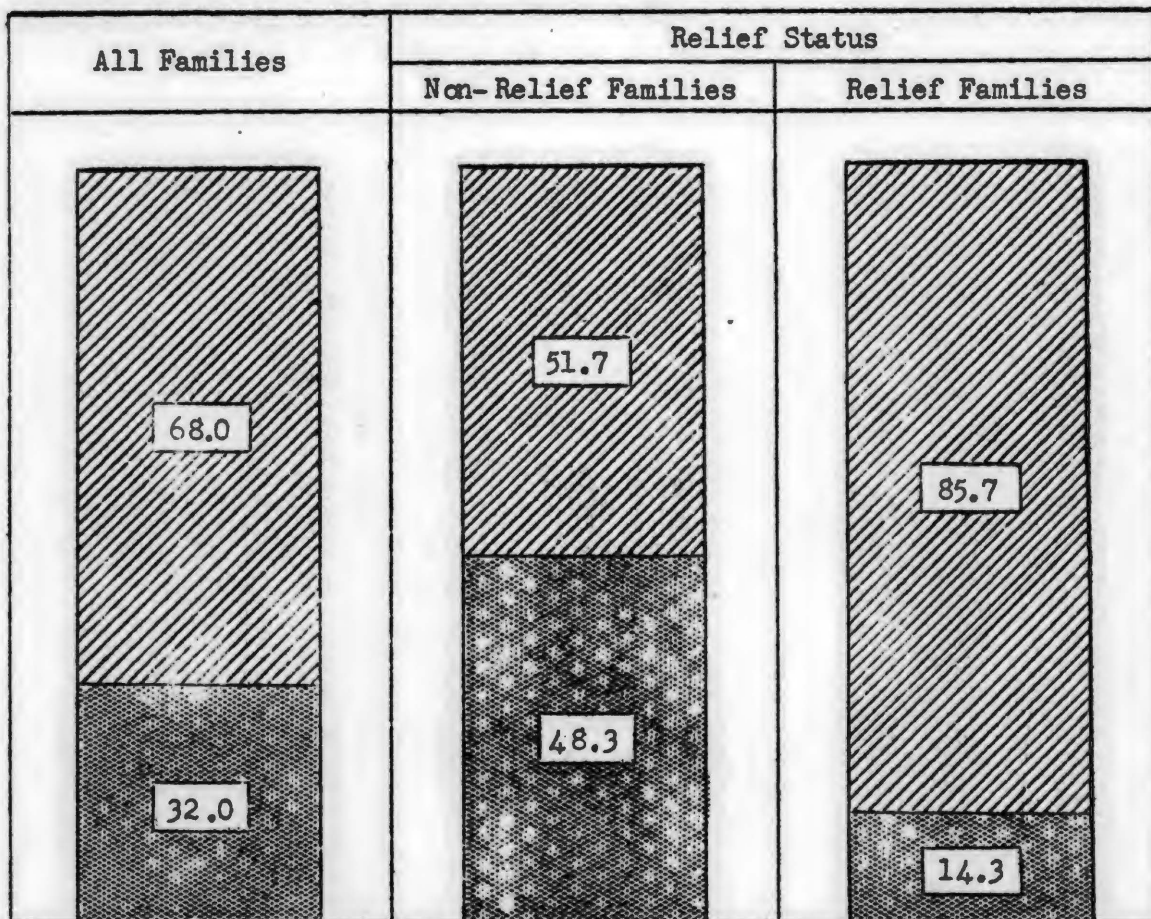
Legend: Under 16 16 - 64 65 and over

Source: Applications for Farm Security grants and other county records.

Despite the fact that on the average the tenant families were larger than the owner families, the owner families had a larger proportion of persons of working age than did the tenants. Sixty-eight percent of the persons in the owner families were 16 to 64 years of age as compared with only 58.4 percent in the tenant families. This difference is doubtless due to the fact that the owners, who are an older group, have older children than the tenants. While it is true that many of the owners' children have left home, many of the children who remain at home are over 16 years of age. In view of the prospects which they have of inheriting the farm upon their fathers' death or retirement it is probable that more of the owners' than the tenants' sons remain at home after passing their twenty-first birthday.

It is significant to note that the number of persons of working age for both owners and renters is much smaller in the relief than in the non-relief group. Seventy-two and three-tenths percent of the persons in non-relief owner families and 62.9 percent of those in the non-relief tenant families were of working age as compared with 54.5 and 56.2 percent for the relief owners and tenants respectively. Apparently the existence of more than one breadwinner in the family is a distinct advantage in keeping off relief rolls.

Figure 7. Type of Tenure as Related to Relief and Non-Relief Status, Kingsbury County, 1938.



Legend: Owners Tenants

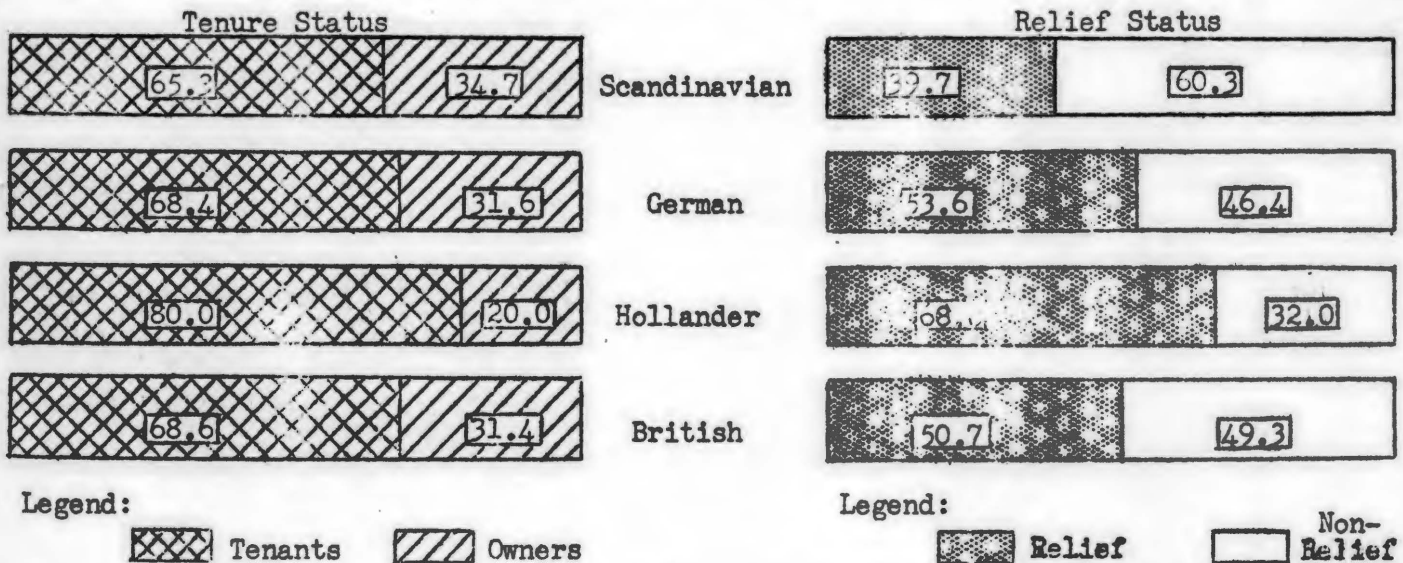
Source: Applications for Farm Security Grants and other county records.

Only 32.0 percent of the farm operators in Kingsbury county owned the farms they operated during 1938. The rising tenancy rate has been one of the most significant developments of recent years. From 29.2 percent in 1900 it has risen steadily to 41.3 in 1910, 51.0 in 1920, 55.7 in 1930, and 68.0 in 1940.

The fact that farm owners are usually better able to withstand economic reverses is illustrated by the fact that only 14.3 percent of the farm operators who received the various forms of public assistance were owners. Because of their longer farming experience most of the owners had accumulated reserves which the tenants did not have. When crop failures came many of them mortgaged their property in order to secure money for living expenses in preference to accepting public assistance.

Although fewer than a third of all the farm operators in Kingsbury county were farm owners, almost half of the farm operators who succeeded in staying off relief were owners.

Figure 8. Tenure and Relief Status of Kingsbury County Farm Households Related to Foreign Ancestral Background, Four Predominant Nationalities, 1938.



Source: Applications for Farm Security Administration grants and other county records.

The ancestral background of almost nine-tenths (89.0 percent) of the farm household heads in Kingsbury county in 1938 was found to be in four nationality groups—Scandinavian, German, British (English, Irish and Scotch) and Holland Dutch. Nearly half (46.3 percent) of the farm household heads were of Scandinavian descent. Twenty-six and seven-tenths percent were of German ancestry; 16.0 percent were descendants of one of the British nationalities, English, Scotch or Irish, the latter constituting the largest proportion; and 1.9 percent were of Holland Dutch descent. The remaining eleven percent were distributed among other nationalities—including 3.7 percent who classified themselves as being of "American" descent. The chart above indicates that a larger proportion of farm households of Scandinavian ancestry have been able to keep off relief rolls than those of any other nationality group. Sixty percent of the Scandinavian household heads succeeded in keeping off relief rolls as compared with 49.3 percent of the British, 46.4 percent of the German and 32.0 percent of the Holland Dutch. It is interesting to note that the Scandinavian group also led the other nationality groups with respect to percentage of ownership, 34.7 percent of the Scandinavian household heads owning their own farms as compared with 31.6, 31.4 and 20.0 percent for the German, British and Hollander groups, respectively.

The fact that the Scandinavians have a longer average length of residence in the county may partially explain their relatively better showing with respect to ownership and ability to keep off relief rolls. As they were the first settlers, the Scandinavians not only homesteaded the best land but they have also had more time to acquire property and accumulate reserves. The Germans, and English, on the other hand, are found chiefly on the poorer land in the western part of the county. In addition their average length of residence is considerably less than that of the Scandinavians.

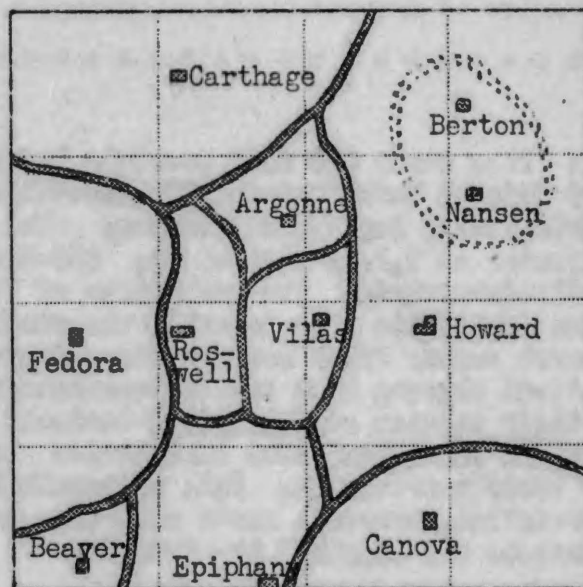
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. In 1938 tenant families were larger than owner families and tenants who received relief had much larger families than the owners who received relief. Since the owner families were much older than the tenant families many of the owner children had become old enough to leave home. It is possible that the owner families may also have originally had fewer children because of a desire for ownership and a higher standard of living. Between 1930 and 1938 the median size of farm families in Kingsbury county decreased from 4.27 to 3.98 persons. The principle cause for the decreasing size of families is the decline in the birth rate and consequent changes in the age composition of the population.
2. Over three-fourths (77.0 percent) of the families were composed of husband and wife; or husband, wife and children. However, there were more broken families among the owners than among the tenants in both relief and non-relief groups. This is probably due to a higher death rate among the owners since they are an older group than the tenants.
3. Much of the contrast between owners and tenants can be explained by variations in age composition. While over one-third of the owners were more than fifty-five years of age, less than one-fifth of the tenants were as old.
4. Both the owners and tenants show considerable permanency of residence. Over three-fourths of the farm families had lived in the county twenty years or more. The non-relief owners had lived in the county the longest of any group. The relief tenants had the smallest proportion living in the county twenty years or more and the largest proportion living in the county less than five years. Relief owners had been in the county longer than the relief tenants, and the non-relief owners longer than the non-relief tenants. Many of those who had moved into the county during the last five years had moved from adjoining counties.
5. Nearly three-fourths (73.4 percent) of the farm owners had farmed twenty years or more in 1938 whereas less than half (44.1 percent) of the tenants had farmed for so long a period. Since it normally requires a number of years for a farm renter to acquire ownership status, it is not surprising to find that a larger proportion of owners than tenants had farmed for twenty years or more. Only 1.4 percent of the owners had farmed less than five years whereas 9.2 percent of the tenants had farmed for that short a period.
6. Despite the fact that, on the average, the tenant families were larger than the owner families, the owner families had a larger proportion (68.0 percent) of persons of working age than did the tenants (58.4 percent). This difference is doubtless due to the difference in age of the owner and tenant parents.
7. Approximately 52 percent of farm families received no public assistance during 1938. Seventy-eight percent of the owners did not receive aid while only 39 percent of the tenants were entirely self-supporting. Eighty-five percent of all farm families receiving relief were tenants.
8. A larger proportion of households of Scandinavian ancestry were able to keep off relief rolls than any other nationality group. The Scandinavian group also lead all other nationality groups with respect to the percentage of farm ownership. It is felt that their longer average length of residence in the county may partially explain the Scandinavians' relatively better showing with respect to ownership and ability to keep off relief rolls.

August, 1941

THE EMERGING RURAL COMMUNITIES
of
Miner County

W. F. Kumlien
Howard M. Sauer
C. Scandrette



LINCOLN MEMORIAL LIBRARY
South Dakota State College, Brookings, South Dakota

In the period of early settlement in Miner county the farmer's contacts were largely limited to his immediate neighborhood. He seldom traveled more than three or four miles—a distance commonly known as a "team haul". In recent years, improved transportation facilities have permitted farm families to go to the village for an increasing proportion of their goods and services. As rural folks have extended their radius of interaction, larger village-centered communities have emerged.

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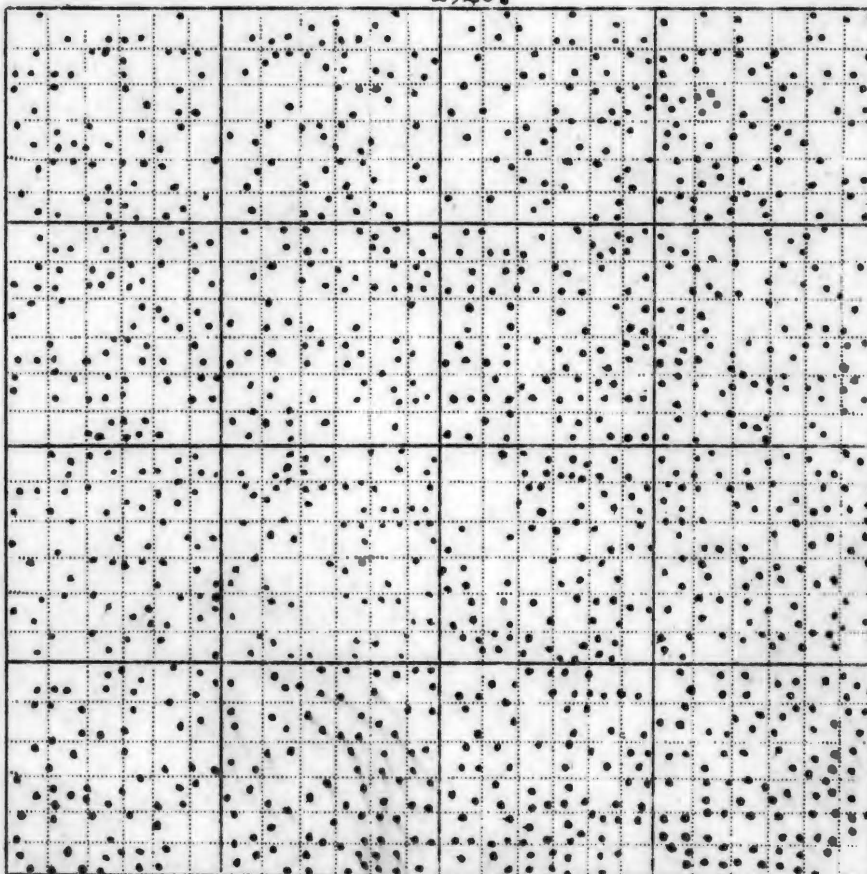
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: This study was made possible by the cooperation of the State and Federal Work Projects Administration with the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station. The project is officially designated as W.P.A. Project No. 665-74-3-143. The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following persons: the two farmers in each township who checked the neighborhood map; church survey field workers who discovered where farm families attend church; high school superintendents who supplied lists of their tuition students; and business men of Miner county trade centers who volunteered information regarding the extent of their trade territories. Full responsibility for statements of interpretation, however, rests with the authors rather than with the persons who supplied the data.

The Emerging Rural Communities of Miner County

People can be most effectively reached and influenced through the social groups to which they belong. It is the purpose of this pamphlet to assist planning groups and other action agencies in Miner county by locating the principle rural groupings in the form of neighborhoods and communities of the county. For a better understanding of the present day status and function of these social groupings, a brief historical sketch is given, with emphasis on the factors leading to the emergence of the rural community which encompasses both town and country.

It is evident that something is wrong with the map below. It is apparent that such important features as villages and highways have been omitted. The 1,178 farmsteads cannot be thought of as so many isolated settlements, but must be considered in relation to their neighborhood and their larger village-centered community settings. The country and village dwellers are interdependent; the country looks to the village for such services as merchandising, recreation, education, etc., and the village depends upon the country for raw materials, trade and support of its institutions.

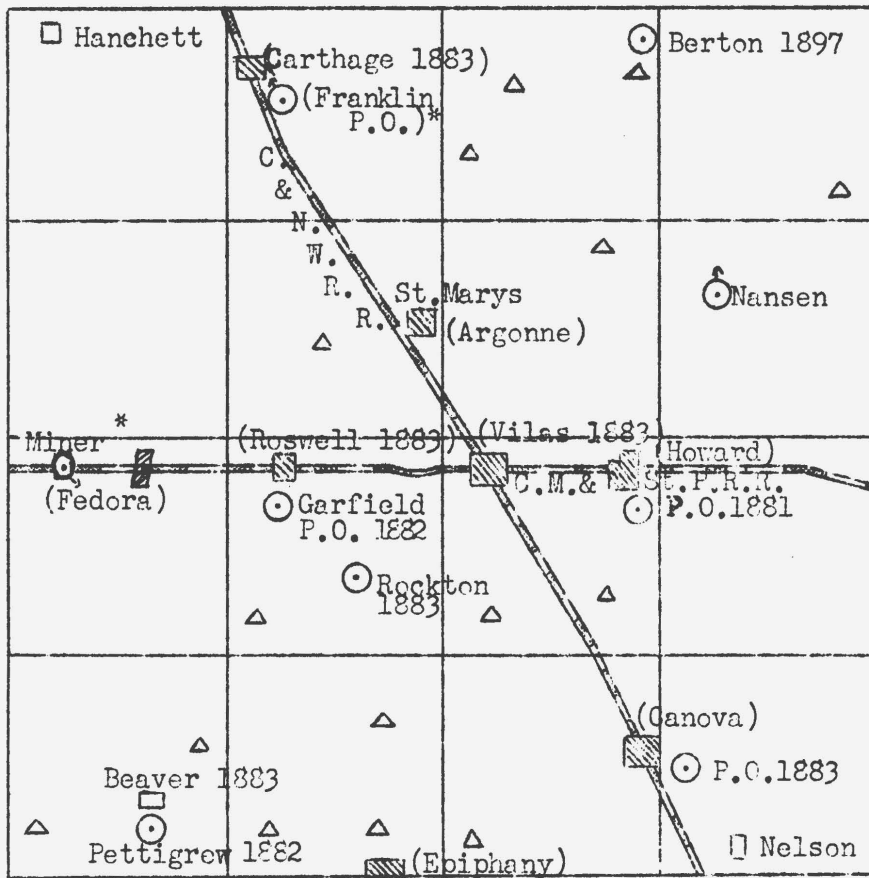
Figure 1. The Location of Farmsteads of Miner county, 1940.



Source: General Highway Map of South Dakota State Highway Planning Survey - 1938.

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Figure 2. Map of Early Miner County



Legend: ○ P.O. and later moved ▣ Early town still in existence
 * Location and name changed □ Early town non-existent
 △ School
 () Modern name

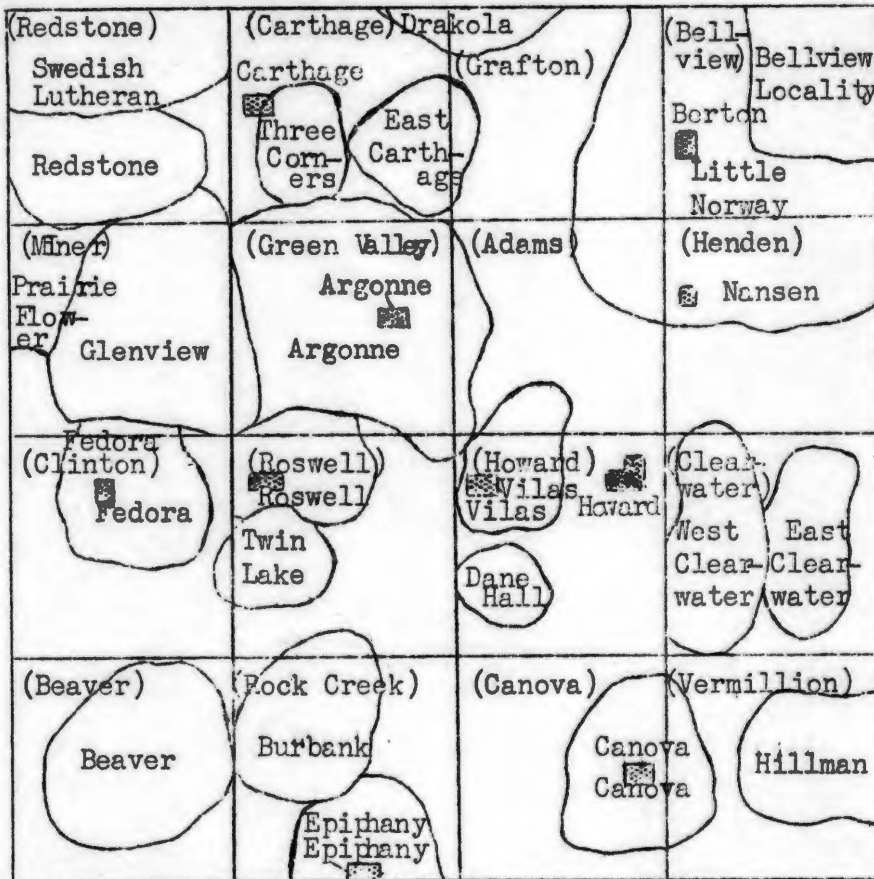
Source: Andrea's Historical Atlas of Dakota, 1884, and other sources.

The pioneer farmer was not wholly self-sufficient from an economic standpoint. He was dependent on the villages, which appeared on the frontier at an early date, for his supply of many essential goods and services.

The first permanent settlers came to Miner county from Minnesota in 1879. Two years later the city of Howard was founded and by 1883 a total of nine towns had been founded. (See Figure 2). They included Pettigrew and Garfield (now Roswell) founded in 1882; Canova, Carthage, Beaver, Rockton, Roswell and Vilas founded in 1883. It was to these rapidly growing towns that the pioneer farmers of Miner county went for various supplies and services. These frontier villages were equipped to supply a surprisingly wide range of services. One year after Howard was founded it boasted of five dry good stores, three hotels, three hardware stores two implement shops, two livery barns, two newspapers, two churches, a school, one bank, one lumber yard, a wagon shop, a drayline, one blacksmith shop, one saloon and other small enterprises. Four attorneys and two grain buyers were also offering their service in Howard at this early date. Carthage, like Howard, soon offered many services. Six months after it was founded it was a thriving town with a population of 250 persons; it had 34 places of business, four church societies, one school building, a banker, a doctor and a resident minister. Similar services were offered in the other frontier towns of Miner county.

In 1882 the Milwaukee railroad was completed to Howard, and the following year the Chicago and Northwestern was completed in Miner county (See Figure 2). There were 49 school districts established and nine school buildings erected during the year 1882-1883. Eight postoffices were also serving the people of Miner county in 1883.

Figure 3. Neighborhoods in Miner County, 1940.



The early settlers of Miner county, bound together by such ties as kinship, common religion, common nationality, and mutual assistance, tended to homestead in groups on adjoining farms. These neighborhood groupings were especially important in supplying the social satisfactions of the pioneer community. Habits of work exchange and united support of educational and religious institutions tended to draw the families comprising the neighborhood still closer together.

Better facilities for transportation and communication have had far-reaching effects on rural group organization. Farm folks have been able to extend their contacts over a much wider area, reaching out beyond the bounds of their local neighborhoods. They have gone more frequently to the village and have discovered they have much in common with village residents. As a result of these forces neighborhoods have declined in importance, some have disappeared, while others have lost certain functions to the village center. Figure 3 shows the neighborhoods which were in existence in Miner county in 1940. These neighborhoods are probably fewer in number and larger in area than those which existed prior to the advent of the automobile. Although their functions are relatively limited, the neighborhoods of Miner county have shown a tendency to persist. When representative farmers of the county were asked to name the factors which hold their neighborhoods together, the most frequent replies in order of occurrence were: "work exchange", "country church", "district school" and "visiting" (tied) "clubs", "same nationality" and "kinship". It would appear that the neighborhood still play a rather significant role in the rural picture, although its importance will probably continue to decline.

Figure 4. Church Community Areas of Miner County, 1940.

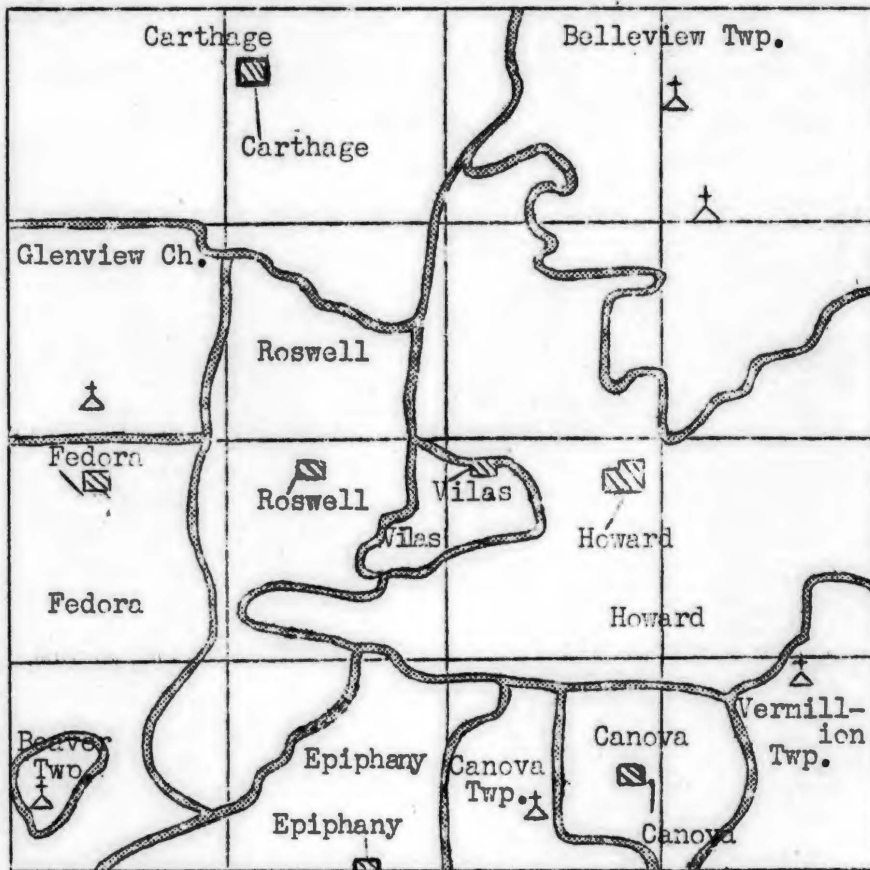
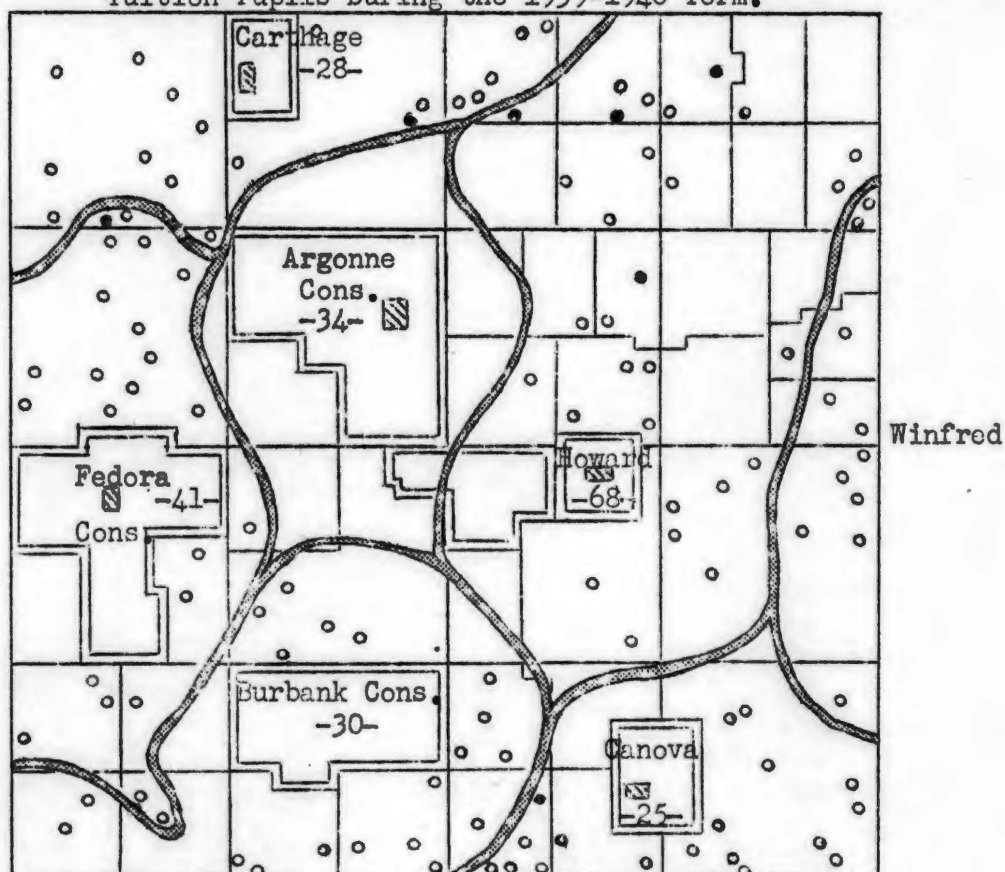


Figure 4 shows the various areas from which the village and open country churches of Miner county draw their members. It is readily seen that the attendance areas of the town churches are considerably larger than those served by the open country churches. Yet it seems that people will not travel as far to attend church as they will to obtain certain other services in the village centers. The fact that there are 7 open country churches besides 16 town churches naturally limits the size and increases the number of community areas as compared with service areas which are more completely village-centered.

However, more and more farm families are attending town churches, a factor which has tended to strengthen town-country relationships. In many sections, the number of participating farm families has become too small to support adequately the open country church. The village churches may eventually take over the religious function for the entire surrounding area.

Figure 5. Areas from which High Schools Enrolled Their Miner County Tuition Pupils During the 1939-1940 Term.

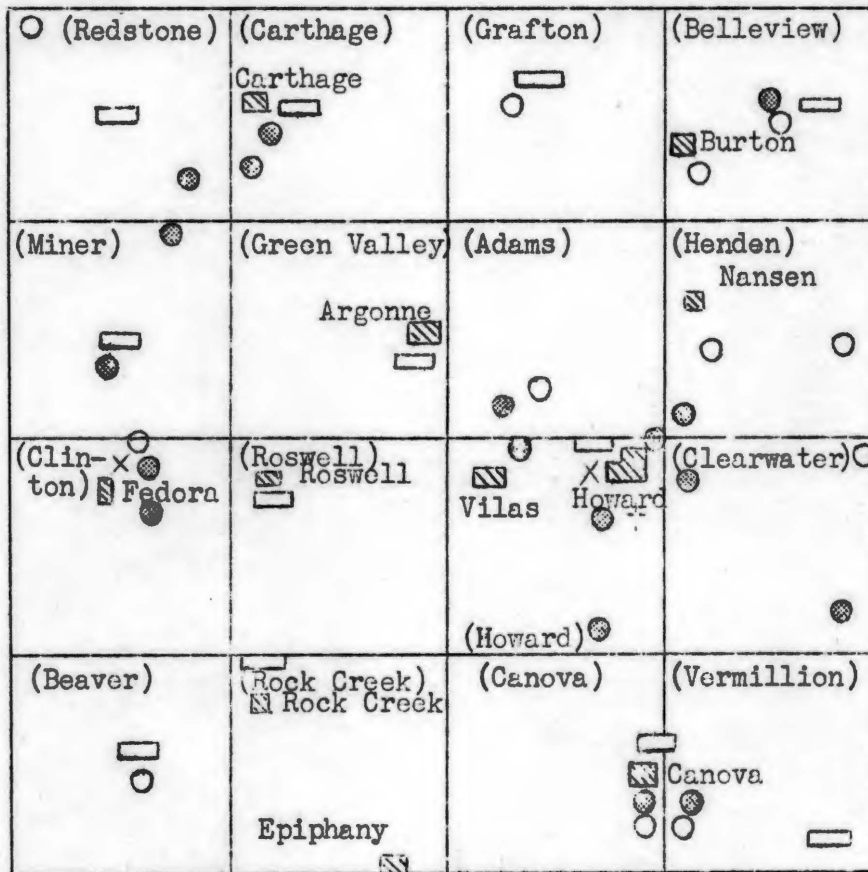


Source: Records of High School Superintendents, 1940.

Since 1921 it has been compulsory for common school districts which do not operate their own high schools to pay tuition costs for students living within their borders who attended high schools in nearby towns or villages. The areas from which the seven high schools (six in Miner county and one in Lake) enrolled the Miner county tuition students are plotted in Figure 5 along with the locations of farmsteads from which the students numbering about 250 are drawn.

The high school service areas correspond rather closely to the composite community areas shown in Figure 8. The high school has become a very strong force in determining community boundaries and in establishing closer town-country relationships. The farmer who has sons or daughters in the village high school concerns himself with its organization and activities. He goes into the village more frequently and as he broadens his contacts with the village people he joins with them in an increasingly varied range of activities. His children in high school make still further adjustments to the larger village centered community life. Through these processes, differences and misunderstandings which may have existed between town and country are gradually disappearing.

Figure 6. Rural Special Interest Groups in Miner County, 1940.

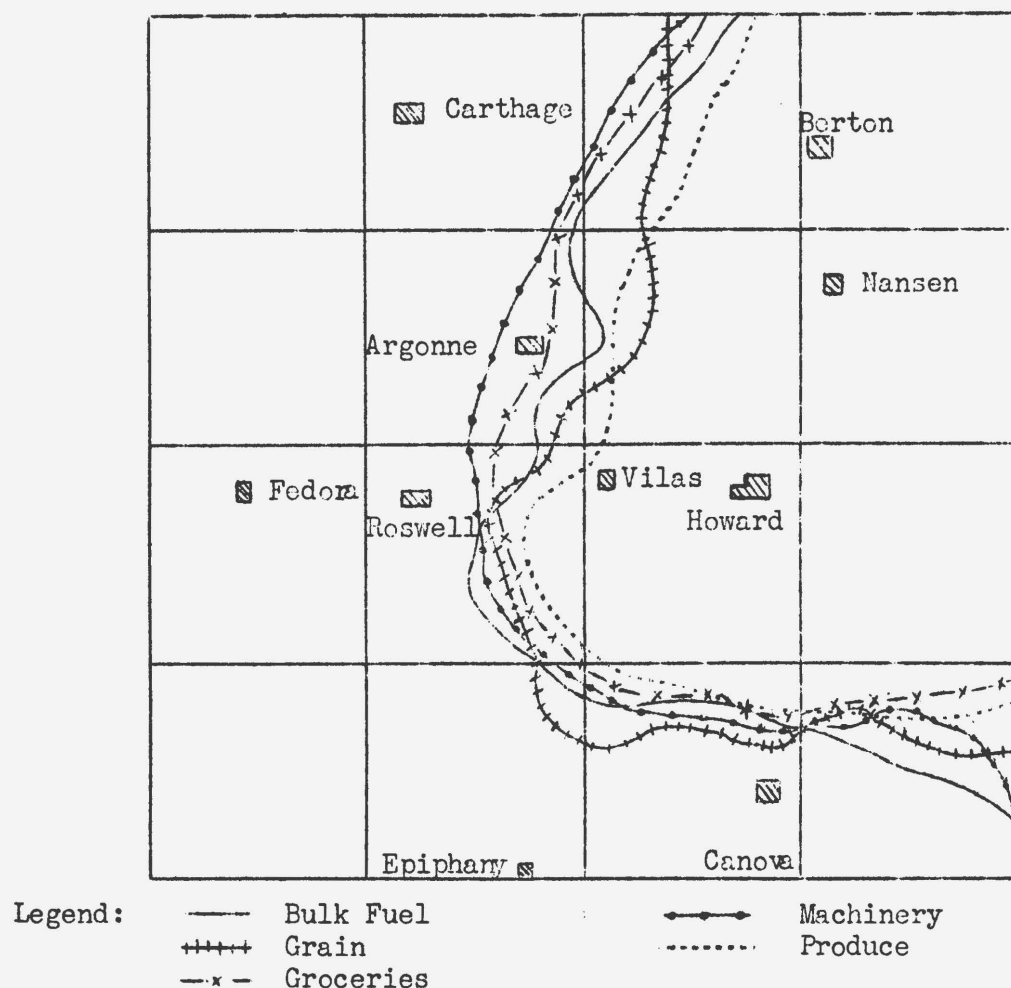


Legend:
 [] Community Clubs
 ○ Womens' Extension Clubs
 ● 4-H Clubs
 X Training Center (Ext. clubs)
 + Farmers' Union Organization

In the period of early settlement of Miner county, residence in a specific locality, proximity, and common life served as the basis for most group organization. The school district, the open-country church, exchange of work, and social activity followed neighborhood lines. Interests were relatively limited and held in common; therefore, group organizations were simple and included almost everyone within the neighborhood.

With the coming of better facilities for travel and communication the country dwellers were able to seek satisfactions in groups of their own choice. The farmer has been exposed to new types of interest groups and associations which often go far beyond neighborhood bounds in recruiting their participants. In 1940, 46 special interest organizations were found among the farm people of Miner county. Eighteen of these groups were 4-H clubs, 13 were Womens' Extension clubs and 12 were Community clubs. (See Fig. 6). These categories do not include informal social gatherings or farm membership in town centered organizations such as Service clubs and lodges. It is evident that group activities, like other aspects of rural life, are being reorganized on a wider community level.

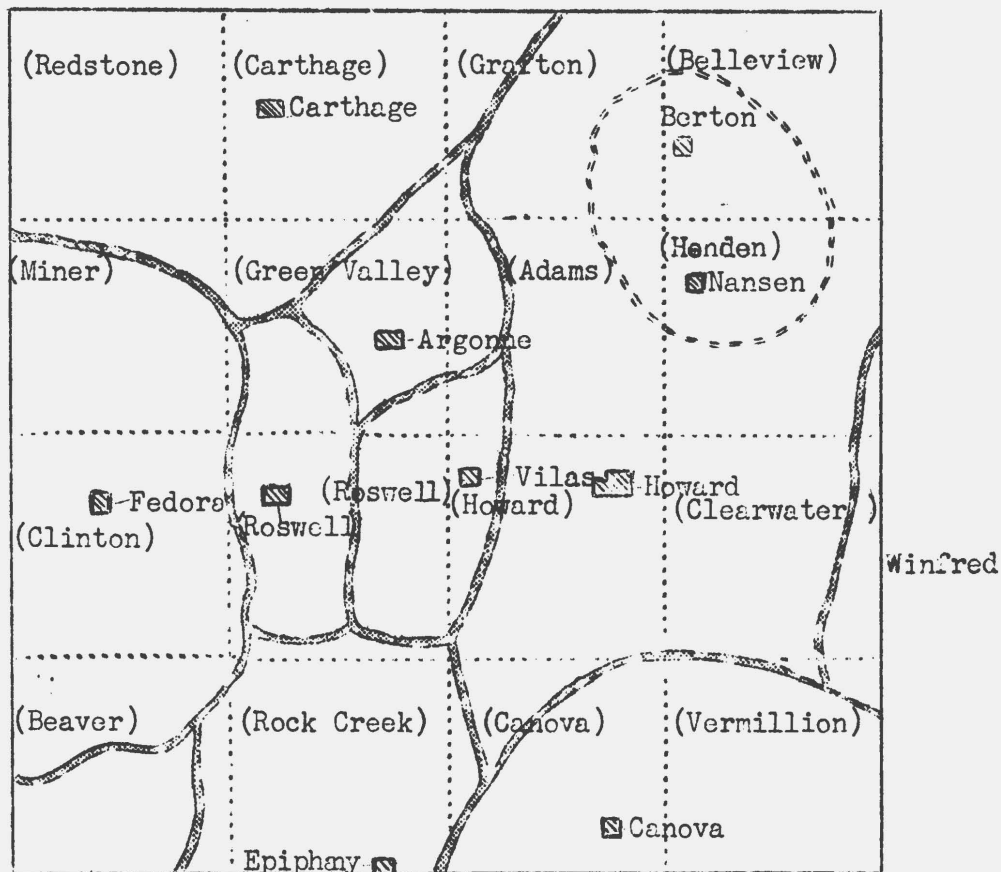
Figure 7. Trade Area for Five Selected Commodities, Howard, 1940.



The farm family, as previously noted, has always been somewhat dependent upon village centers for the satisfaction of its economic needs. Since the coming of the automobile, many functions which were formerly neighborhood-centered have been shifted to the village. Improved transportation and communication facilities in recent years have greatly increased the number of trips made to the village, as well as the variety and quantity of goods and services supplied by the village centers. The cross-roads general store has all but passed from the picture; the village has become the economic core of the surrounding farm area. It serves as a market for agricultural produce and, in turn, supplies the farmer with his groceries, clothing, goods used in the farming enterprise—oil, twine, fencing, machinery, etc., and many other necessities. Increasing interdependence of town and country in their trade relationships is evident.

Figure 7 shows the trade areas of Howard for five commodities selected because of their importance to the farmer. These commodities are bulk fuels, grain, groceries, machinery and produce. Since the boundaries are based upon information supplied by Howard tradesmen, they represent only personal estimates, and it has been found that there is considerable overlapping with trade areas secured in similar fashion for other towns of the county. Despite their limitations, Figure 7 does show the approximate areas served by dealers in the selected commodities. By combining the trade, church, and high school service areas it is possible to arrive at a composite community area for Howard (See Fig. 8) which rather closely describes the natural community boundaries.

Figure 8. Composite Community Areas of Miner County, 1940.



"A rural community is regarded as an area including the village center and the surrounding territory, the limits of the territory being determined by the farthest distances where the agencies and institutions of the village serve the majority of the families in a majority of their activities." DWIGHT SANDERSON

* * * * *

Until about 25 years ago, the rural community was relatively unimportant and hardly existent in recognizable form. The social life of farm people was centered largely in the neighborhood. The one-room country school and the open country church, two important rural institutions, strengthened the neighborhood ties. More recently the tremendous advances in transportation and communication have brought widespread changes in the structure of rural group life. Depopulation through outward migration has weakened many neighborhoods. Others have lost their principle functions with the decline of the district school. A larger number of farmers are going to the village for church services and sending their children to the village school.

The same forces which have led to the decline of neighborhoods have been responsible for the reorganization of rural life on a larger community basis. Many of the functions dropped by the neighborhoods have been assumed by village centers. Figure 8 shows the composite community areas of Miner county. These areas were located by first plotting on a single map the trade, high school, and church service areas for each village, then selecting a boundary in each case which was most representative of all the plotted areas. Equitable division was made of those regions subject to over-lapping claims by two or more villages. Berton and Nansen have been included in the Howard area as they do not offer enough services to constitute a separate community area. It seems that the size of the community varies directly with the population of the village center and the number of services it supplies.

SUMMARY

Various historical changes in social organization have been shown in this pamphlet in order to trace the gradual emergence of the present rural community. The rural neighborhood, of which the community is essentially an enlarged reproduction, functioned best during the horse and buggy days. It consisted of ten to twenty families which frequently clustered about some single economic or social service, such as a general store, a blacksmith shop, post office, a rural school or a church. In some instances the neighborhood was merely a social grouping held together by some such common bond as kinship, neighborliness or exchange of work.

With the coming of the automobile and good roads most of the economic services were readily taken over by the village or town. The only institutions left in many open-country areas were the rural schools and churches. Even the open-country churches have been giving way during the last few years. At the present time they make up less than one-fourth of all churches in the state, and of those which remain only 7 percent have resident ministers. Most country churches are now yoked with a town church, with the same minister serving two or more congregations.

During the past decade the rural district school system has declined in much the same manner. Recent studies reveal that rural school enrollments for the state have declined more than 25 percent since the peak year of 1930. Over half of the open-country schools enroll ten or fewer pupils, and in some counties as many as 25 to 30 percent enroll five or fewer. When the enrollment drops to five or below, it has been customary to close the school and send the remaining pupils to a neighboring school, paying tuition and transportation costs. In some cases the remaining pupils have been sent to nearby village or town schools.

It now appears that the villages and towns are becoming the service centers for the rural community. The village center and its surrounding service area constitute the new rural community, which makes up the prevailing type of social organization in South Dakota. Thus in a typical county there will be as many rural communities as there are villages and towns.

IMPLICATIONS

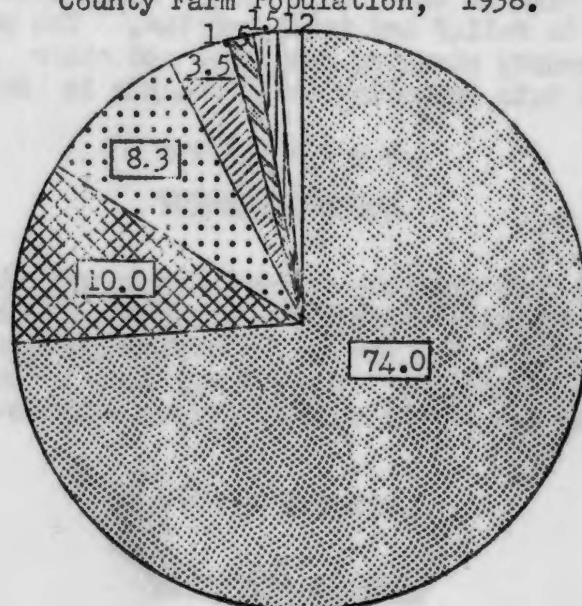
There are definite implications growing out of this situation both for the farmer and the townsman. For the farmer it means that he is just as truly a member of the rural community as is the village resident. The fact that he can obtain the various economic and social services in the center at a reasonable cost makes it possible for him to be a specialist in agricultural production. Likewise for the townsman it means that he can specialize in his particular field of service as long as he serves his open country and town neighbors efficiently. Thus there are distinct mutual advantages in maintaining harmonious town-country relationships.

Public servants, such as extension agents, FSA and AAA workers, teachers, ministers, etc., should recognize that the new rural community is a natural community which has evolved through gradual economic and social adjustments. All planning activities should take into account the natural community areas and should utilize them as the logical units of rural organization.








CHARACTERISTICS OF FARM FAMILIES
in
Brookings County as Related
to
Tenure and Relief Status

W. F. Kumlien
C. Scandrette

Types of Households in the Brookings
County Farm Population, 1938.



Legend:

-  Normal family (husband and wife, or husband, wife and children)
-  Normal family and other persons
-  Two or more unmarried adults
-  One unmarried adult
-  Broken family (families in which one or both parents were absent from the home due to desertion, divorce or death)
-  Two or more normal families
-  Other types

Source: Applications for Farm Security grants and other county records

EXPLANATORY NOTE

During 1938 certain social and economic information was secured for each farm operator in Brookings county. This information was entered on a standardized schedule designated as form SS-1-A. For families who had applied for Farm Security grants, this information was secured from grant applications on file in the local Farm Security office. For families who had not applied for Farm Security assistance this information was secured from a variety of sources including: assessors' listing sheets in the Auditors office; birth records in the Clerk of Courts office; school census and teachers reports in the Superintendent of Schools office; and public assistance information in the Social Security office. This pamphlet is the third in a series of three to be based on the material tabulated from the SS-1-A schedules. The two preceding pamphlets are "The Problem of Over-Churched and Unchurched Areas in Brookings County," Rural Sociology Pamphlet No. 21 and "The Problem of Population Adjustments in Brookings County," Rural Sociology Pamphlet No. 30. Throughout this pamphlet certain measurable characteristics of Kingsbury county farm families--such as size of families, length of residence, age distribution, etc.--are related to relief and tenure status. The purpose of this pamphlet is to supply the county planning committee and other interested persons with significant social data regarding farm families in Brookings county.

* * * * *

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

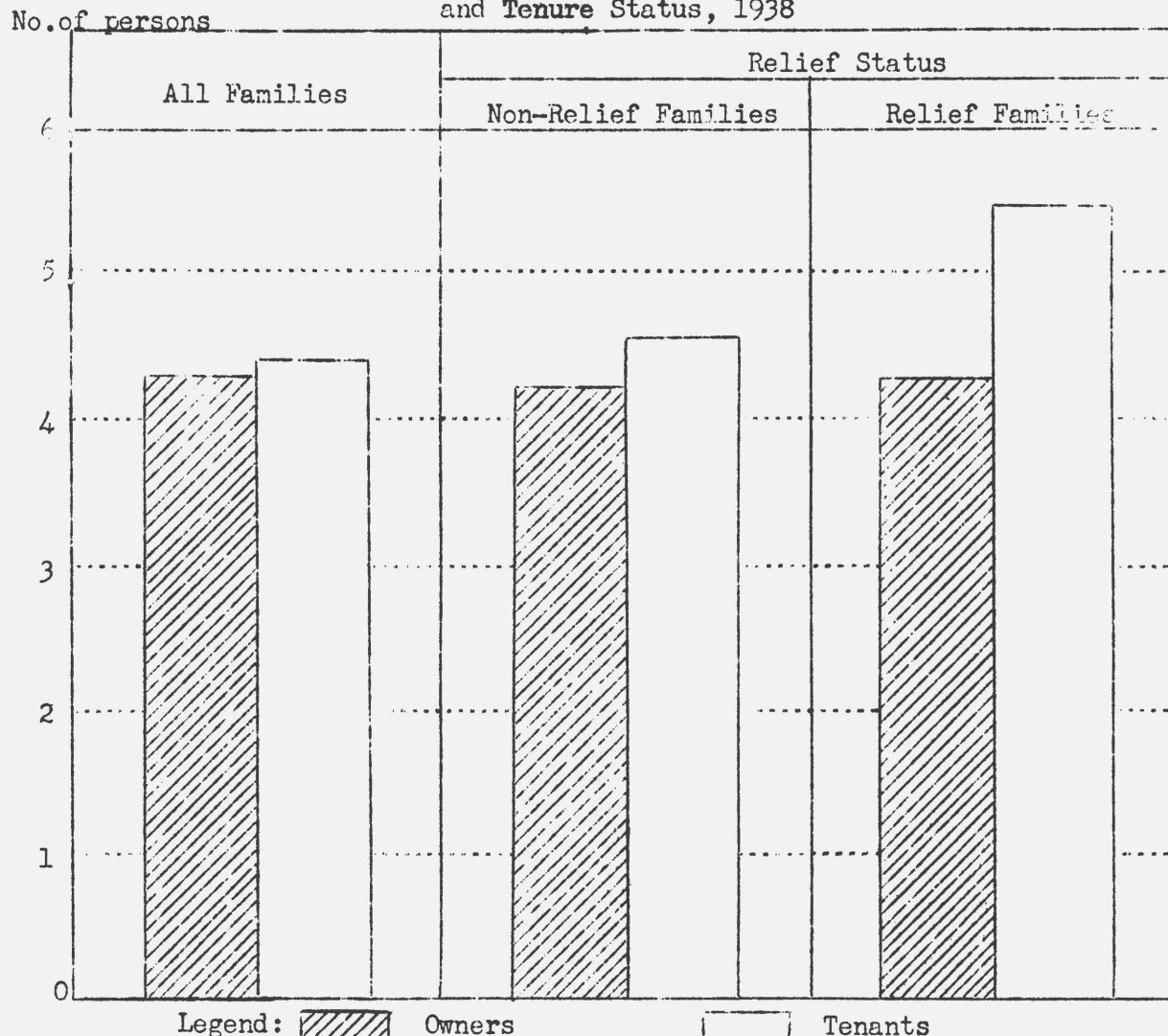
This study was made possible through the cooperation of the State Work Projects Administration and the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station. The project is officially designated as W.P.A. Project No. 665-74-3-143. The authors wish to acknowledge their indebtedness to all of the county offices mentioned in the explanatory note.

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Figure 1. Median Size of Farm Families in Brookings County, by Relief and Tenure Status, 1938

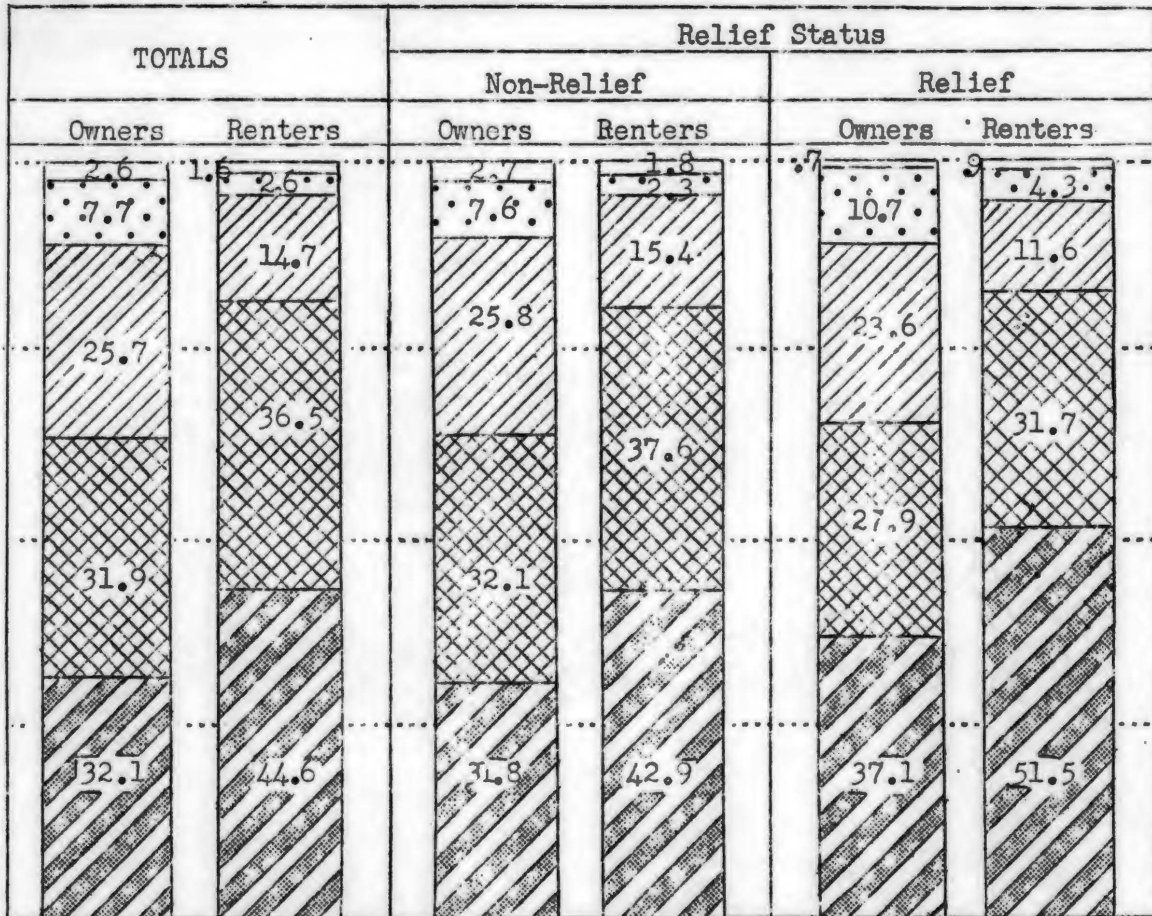


Source: Applications for Farm Security grants and other county records.

It is noteworthy that the median size of non-relief owner and tenant families alike was smaller than for relief families. In the relief group the median size family was 4.25 persons for the owners and 5.43 for the tenants as compared with 4.21 and 4.54 persons for the non-relief owners and tenants, respectively. The fact that the median family size for the relief group were larger than that of the non-relief groups, for both owners and tenants, indicates that the necessarily heavy expenditures of larger families makes it more difficult for them to avoid relief dependency.

Several explanations may be advanced for the greater dependency of the tenant group. As this group is younger, it has had less time in which to acquire adequate reserves and has accumulated less property on which to borrow for living expenses. The average farm unit for the tenant groups' income was smaller. Approximately 85 percent of the relief group were tenants. Comparison of owner and tenant families reveals that the tenant families were slightly larger than owner families. The median size for the owners being 4.31 persons as compared with 4.33 for the tenants. This difference in size of owner and tenant families may be largely attributed to the fact that the tenants are a younger group and consequently a smaller proportion of their children were old enough to have left home. Therefore, the tenants as a group had a larger number of dependents to support.

Figure 2. Age Distribution of the Brookings County Farm Population by Tenure and Relief Status, 1938



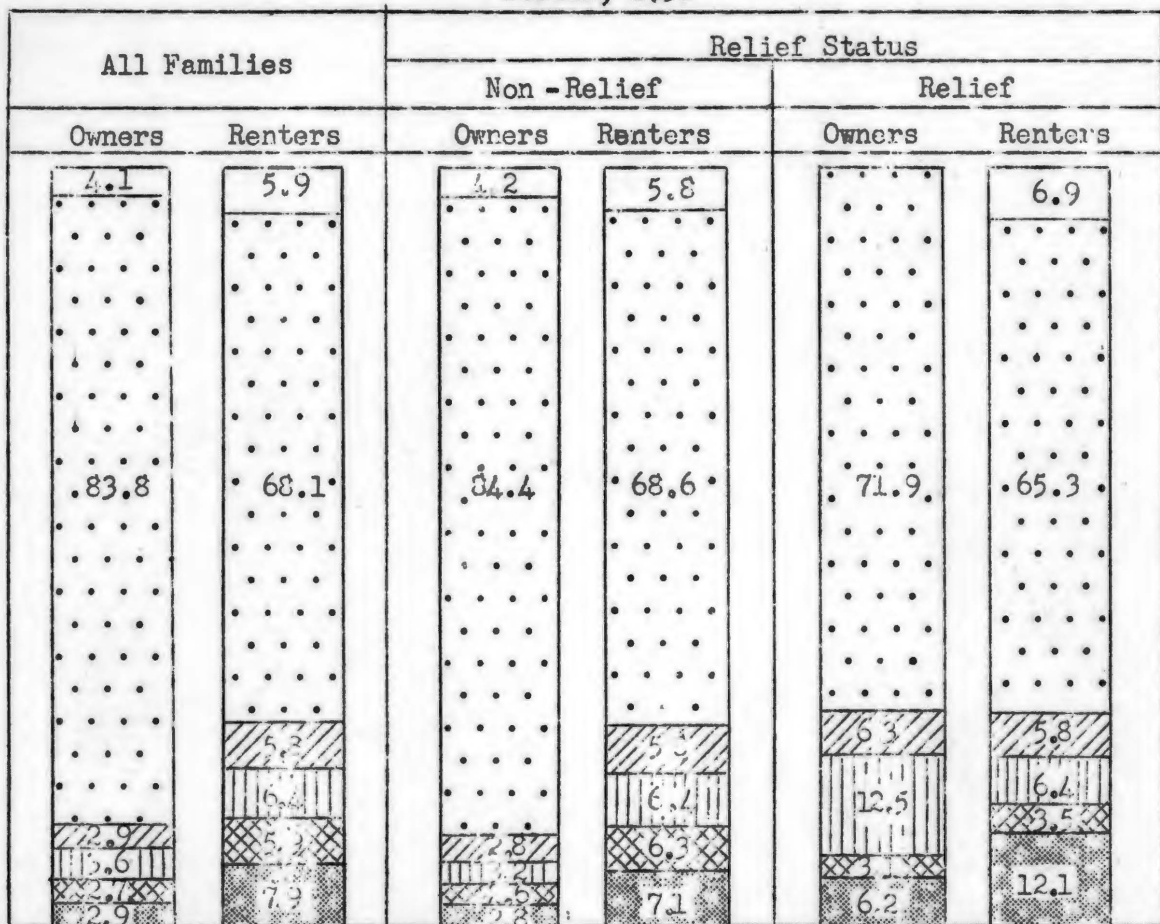
Legend: Under 20 20 - 44 years 45 - 64 years 65 and over Unknown

Source: Applications for Farm Security Administration grants and other county records.

In 1938, 44.6 percent of all persons in the tenant families were under 20 years of age whereas only 32.1 percent of the persons in the owner families were that young. Since the tenant household heads on the average were considerably younger than the owner heads they consequently had a larger number of young children at home. On the other hand, a large number of children from the owner group had passed their twentieth birthday and many of them had left the parental home. It will be noted that the proportion of persons in the older age groups (65 and above) was nearly three times as great for the owners as for the tenants.

A comparison of relief and non-relief groups reveals that for both owners and tenants the proportion of persons below 20 years of age in the relief group is considerably higher than in the non-relief group, the percentage being 49.7 and 38.5 respectively. Over half (51.5 percent) of the persons in relief tenant households were under 20 years of age as compared with only 38.5 percent for the non-relief owners. The difference in age distribution between relief and non-relief groups may be largely explained by the fact that most of the relief group (85 percent) are tenants, which has previously been pointed out, are a younger group and consequently, have a larger number of young children. The records indicate that the owners who received relief were, for the most part, younger owners. Consequently, they also had a comparatively large number of children at home.

Figure 3. Length of Residence in Brookings County by Tenure and Relief Status, 1938



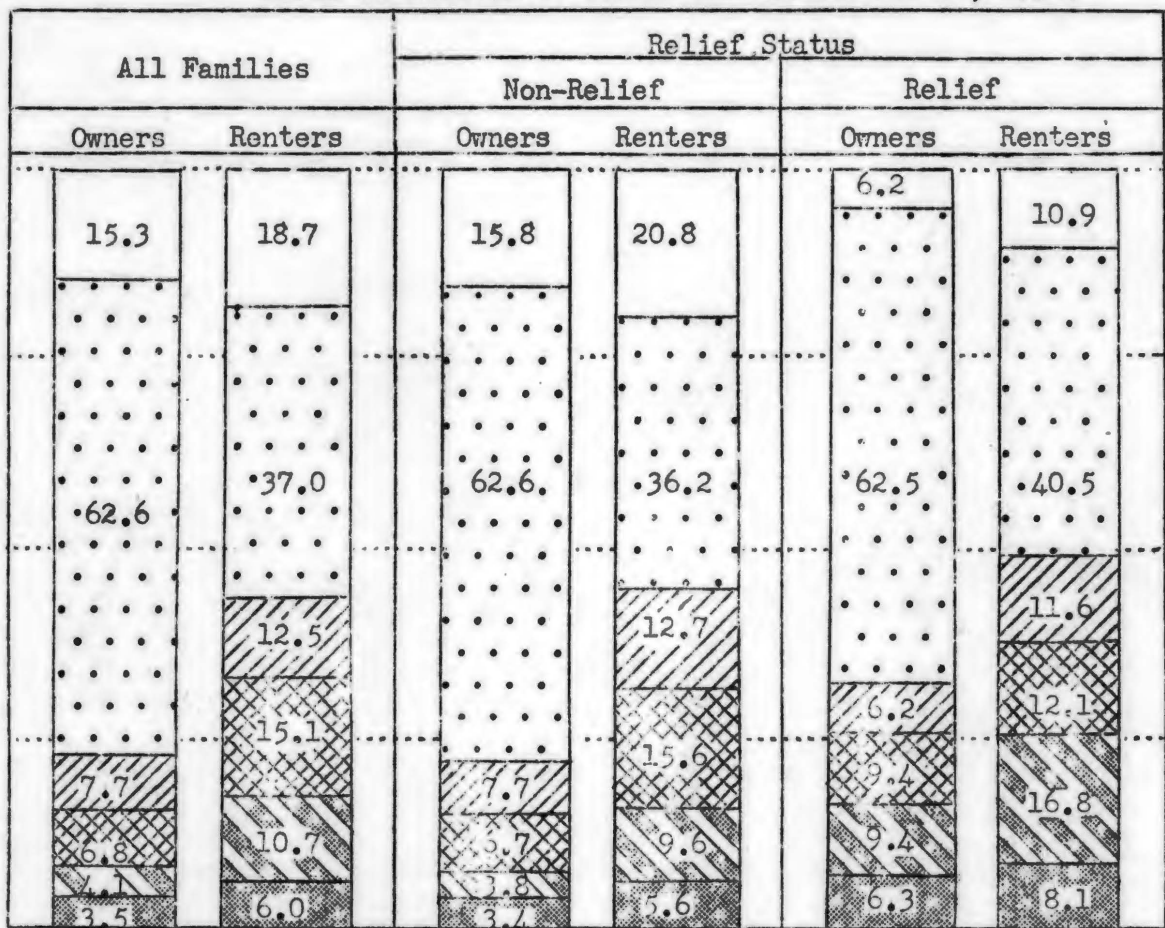
Legend: Under 5 years 10 - 14 years 20 years or more
 5 - 9 years 15 - 19 years Unknown







Source: Applications for Farm Security grants and other county records.

Nearly three-fourths (73.5 percent) of all farm family heads in Brookings county had lived in this county twenty years or more in 1938. Over eight-tenths of the owners (83.8 percent) had lived in the county more than twenty years whereas only 68.1 percent of the tenants had lived in the county that length of time. Only 2.9 percent of the owners had lived in Brookings county fewer than five years as compared to 7.9 percent of the tenants. The same disparity, to an increased extent, exists between the owner and tenant family heads with respect to years of farming experience. In view of the fact that it is often necessary for a farmer to spend a number of years as a tenant before acquiring sufficient reserves to purchase a farm of his own, this difference in length of residence and farming experience is to be expected.

A comparison of the relief and non-relief groups reveals that for both owners and tenants a smaller proportion of the relief group had been residents of the county for twenty years or more. Almost three-fourths (74.5 percent) of the non-relief group had resided in the county twenty or more years whereas only two-thirds (66.1 percent) of the relief group had lived in the county so long. The fact that twice as large a proportion (11.2 percent) of the relief group had lived in the county less than five years as that of the non-relief group (5.6 percent), indicates that length of residence is a factor in economic stability. Apparently there is some truth in the old adage, "a rolling stone gathers no moss".

Notes



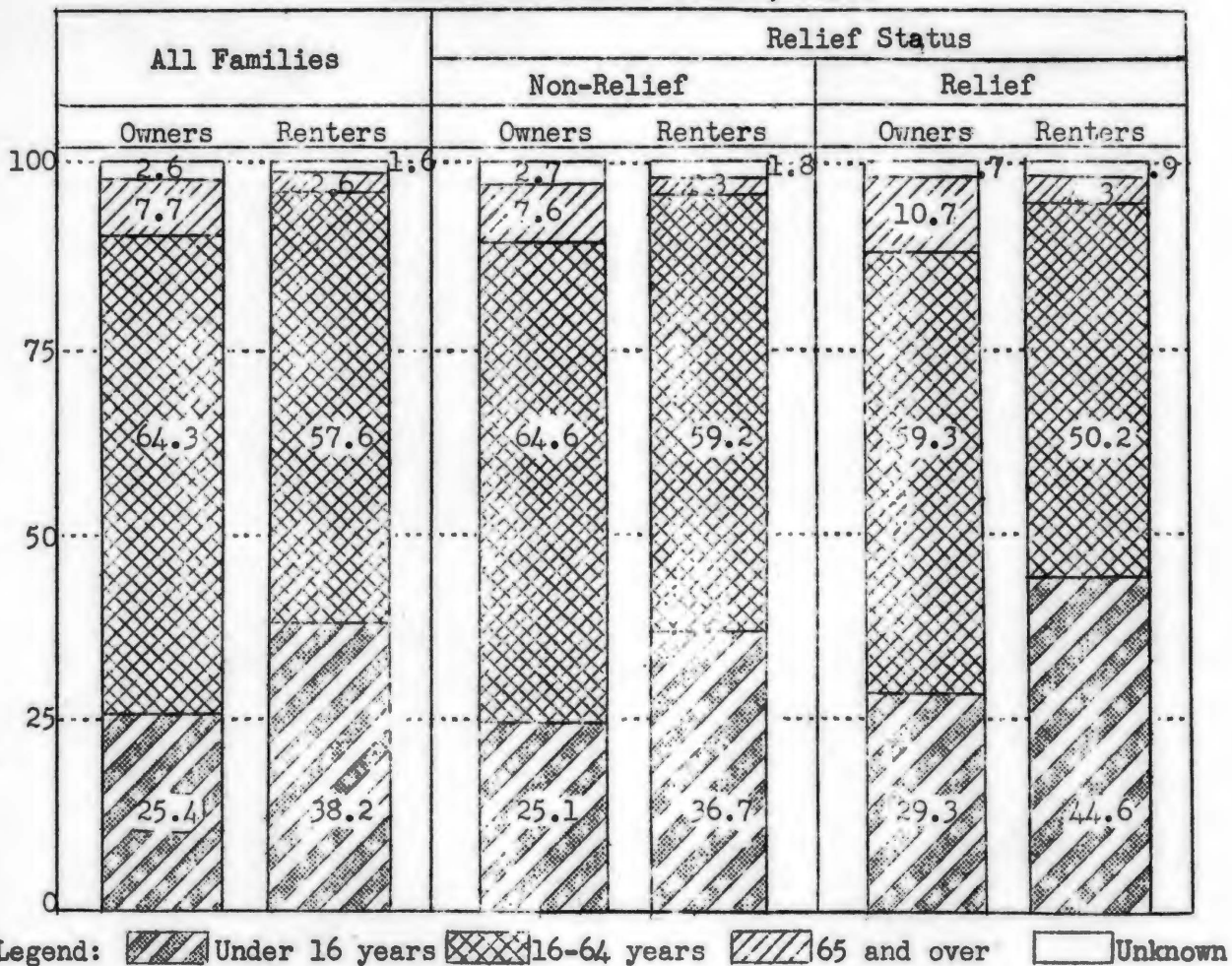
Legend:  Under 5 years  10 - 14 years  20 and over
 5 - 9 years  15 - 19 years  Unknown

Source: Applications for Farm Security Administration grants and other county records.

Sixty-two and six-tenths percent of the farm owners had farmed for more than 20 years whereas only 37.0 percent of the tenants had farmed for so long a period. Only 3.5 percent of the farm owners had farmed less than five years, whereas nearly twice that large a proportion (6.0 percent) of the tenants had farmed that short a period. Since it normally requires a number of years for a farm tenant to acquire ownership status it is not surprising to find that a larger proportion of owners than tenants have farmed for 20 years or more.

It will be noted that the proportion of owners and tenants who had farmed 20 years or more was substantially the same in the non-relief and relief groups as in the total group. The proportion farming less than ten years varied from 7.2 percent for the non-relief owners to 24.9 percent for the relief tenants.

Figure 5. Persons of Working Age in Brookings County Farm Families, by Tenure and Relief Status, 1938.

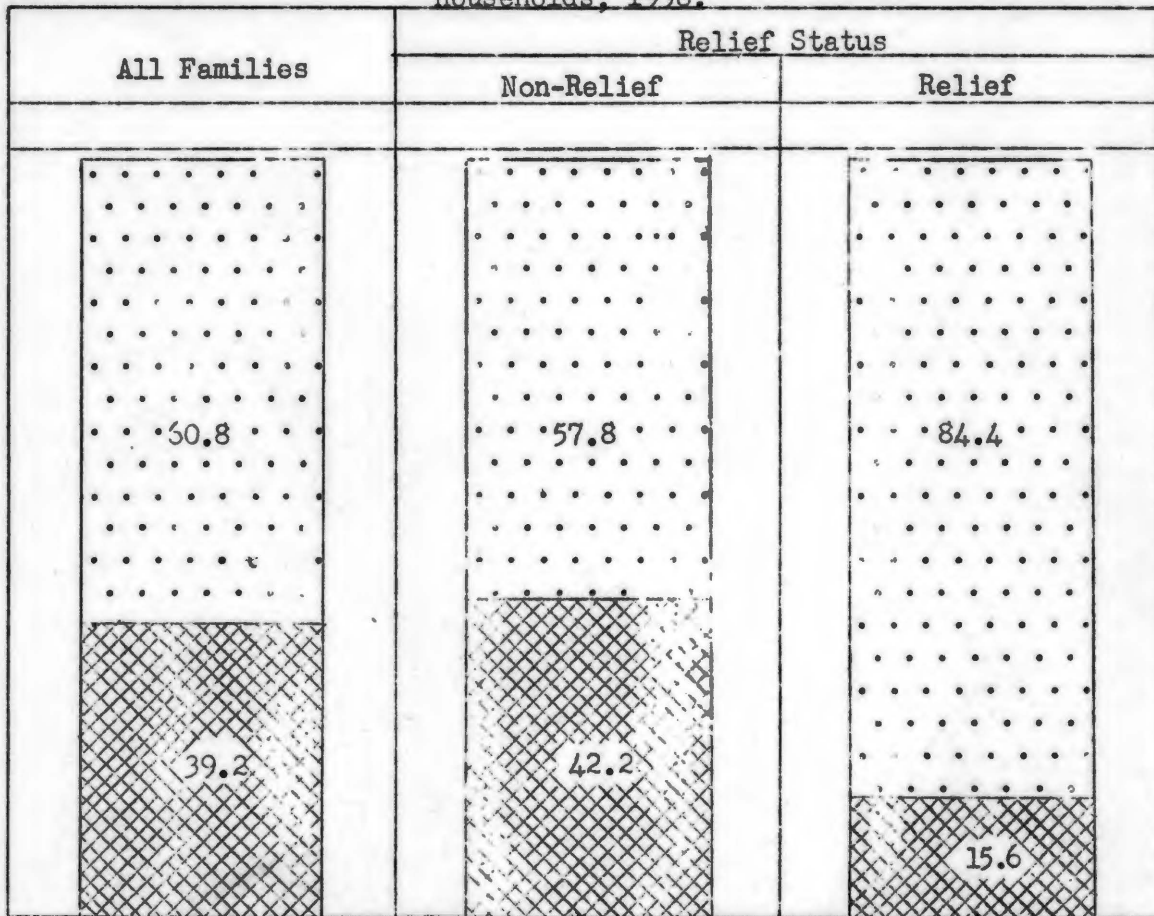


Source: Applications for Farm Security grants and other county records.

Despite the fact that the average size of the tenant households was larger than that of the owners households, the owners had a larger proportion of persons of working age (above 16 years of age) than did the tenants. This was true for both the relief and non-relief groups. Sixty-four and three-tenths percent of the persons in the owner households were 16-64 years of age as compared with 57.6 percent for the tenants. Only 25.4 percent of the persons in owner households were under 16 years of age as compared with 38.2 percent for the tenants. This difference is doubtless due to the fact that the owners, who are an older group, have more children above 16 years of age than the tenants. In view of the prospects which they have of inheriting the farm upon their father's death or retirement it is probable that more of the owners than the tenant's sons remain at home after passing their 21st birthday. It is significant that only 2.6 percent of the persons in the tenant households were over 65 years of age whereas nearly three times that proportion (7.7 percent) of the persons in owner households were of that age.

The proportion of persons of working age for both owners and renters was considerably smaller for the relief than for the non-relief group. Sixty-four and six-tenths percent of the non-relief owner group and 59.2 percent of the non-relief tenants group were of working age as compared with 59.3 and 50.2 percent for the relief owners and tenants respectively. It is evident, therefore, that a larger proportion of breadwinners tends to reduce relief dependency.

Figure 6. Type of Tenure as Related to Relief Status, Brookings County Households, 1938.



Legend: Owners Renters

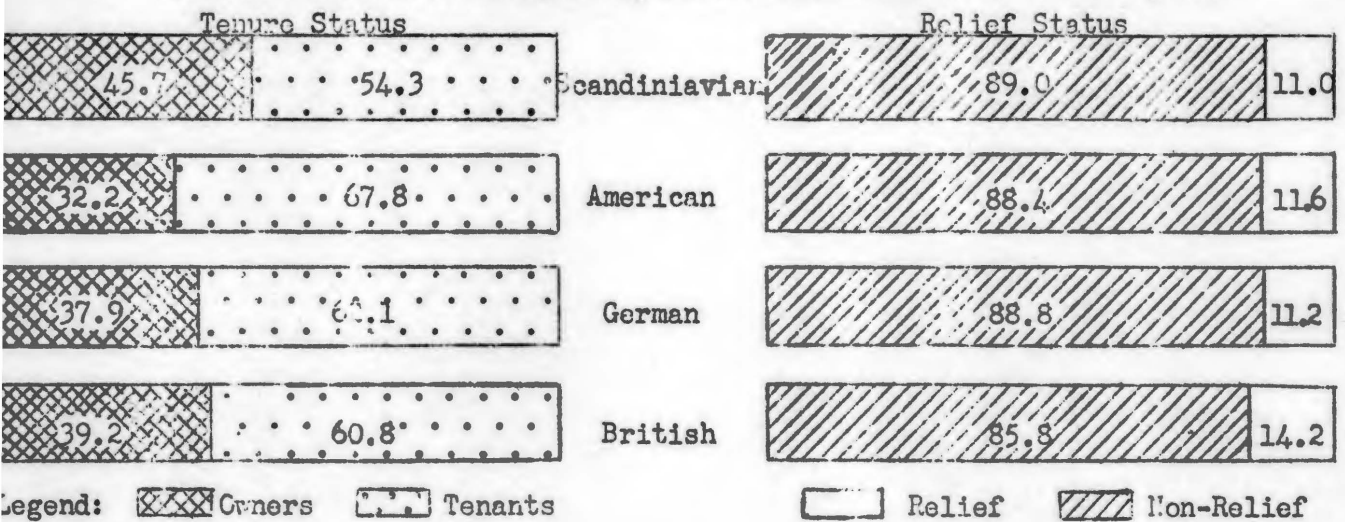
Source: Applications for Farm Security Grants and other county records.

During 1938 less than four-tenths (39.2 percent) of the farm operators in Brookings county owned the farm they operated. The rising tenancy rate has been one of the most significant developments of recent years. From 29.6 in 1900 it has increased steadily to 42.1 in 1910, 46.0 in 1920, 52.6 in 1930 and 57.3 in 1940. Between 1938 and 1940 the proportion owning the farm they operated increased from 39.2 to 42.7. The increase in farm ownership between 1938 and 1940 can possibly be explained by the fact that the Federal Land Bank and various land-owning insurance companies have made a special effort to sell their holdings to their tenants.

The fact that farm owners are usually better able to withstand economic reverses is indicated by the fact that only 15.6 percent of farm operators receiving public assistance during 1938 were owners, nearly 85 percent of the relief group being tenants.

Because of their longer farming experience most of the owners had accumulated reserves which the tenants did not have. Even if they had not accumulated reserves they had real estate on which to borrow. When crop failures came many of them mortgaged their property in order to secure money for living expenses in preference to applying for public assistance.

Figure 7. Tenure and Relief Status of Brookings County Farm Household Heads as Related to Ancestral Background, Four Predominant Nationalities, 1938



Source: Applications for Farm Security Administration grants and other county records.

The ancestral background of over nine-tenths of the farm household heads in Brookings county was found in four nationality groups — Scandinavian, American, German and British (English, Irish and Scotch). The term "ancestral background" is here defined as the nationality group with which each farm operator personally identified himself. Over four-tenths (40.1 percent) of the farm household heads were of Scandinavian descent; 19.9 classified themselves as being of American ancestry; 19.8 percent were of German descent; and 10.4 were descendants of one of the British nationality groups (English, Irish or Scotch). The remaining 9.8 percent were distributed among several other nationalities, Holland Dutch constituting the largest proportion.

The chart above indicates that the Scandinavians led all other nationality groups with respect to percentage of farm ownership, 44.4 percent of the Scandinavian household heads owning their own farms as compared with 36.7, 36.7 and 30.2 for the Americans, Germans and British respectively. A slightly larger proportion of farm households of Scandinavian descent have been able to keep off relief rolls than was true of the other three predominant nationalities. Eighty-nine percent of the Scandinavian group succeeded in keeping off relief rolls as compared with 88.4, 88.8, and 85.8 for the German, American and British groups, respectively. It will be noted that the variation between the nationality groups with respect to relief dependency is so slight as to be statistically not significant.

The fact that the Scandinavians have a longer average length of residence in the county may partially explain their relatively better showing with respect to farm ownership. As they were the first settlers in Brookings county, the Scandinavians not only homesteaded the best land but they have also had more time in which to acquire property and accumulate reserves.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. In 1938, the year for which data for this study were secured, tenant families were larger than owner families and tenants who received relief had much larger families than the owners who received relief. Since the parents of the owner families were older, many of their children had become old enough to leave home. It is possible that the owner families may also have originally had fewer children because of a desire for ownership and a high standard of living.
2. Almost three-fourths (74.0 percent) of all families in Brookings county were normal families consisting of husband and wife; or husband, wife and children. The proportion of normal families was higher for the tenant group (78.5 percent) than for the owner group (66.0 percent). There was a larger proportion of broken families among the owners than among the tenants in both relief and non-relief categories. There was twice as large a proportion of households among the owner group composed of two or more single persons than was true of the tenant group.
3. Much of the difference between owners and tenants with respect to such measurable characteristics as size of family, length of residence, years of farming experience, and relief dependency can be explained by variations in age composition. While well over a third (41.7 percent) of the heads of owner households were over 55 years of age, less than one-sixth (14.9 percent) of the heads of tenant households were as old.
4. Both the owners and tenants show considerable permanency of residence, almost three-fourths (73.5 percent) of all Brookings county farm families having lived in the county twenty years or more. The non-relief owners had lived in the county the longest of any group. The relief tenants had the smallest proportion living in the county twenty years or more and the largest proportion living in the county less than five years. Relief owners had been in the county longer than the relief tenants, and the non-relief owners longer than the non-relief tenants.
5. Nearly two-thirds (62.6 percent) of the farm owners had farmed twenty years or more, whereas only slightly more than one-third (37.0 percent) of the tenants had farmed for that long a period. Since it normally requires a number of years for a renter to acquire ownership status, it is not surprising to find that a larger proportion of owners than tenants had farmed for twenty years or more. Only 3.5 percent of the owners had farmed for less than five years as compared with 6.0 percent for the tenants.
6. Despite the fact that, on the average the tenant families were larger than the owner families. The owner families had a larger proportion (64.3 percent) of persons of working age, than did the tenants (57.6 percent). This difference is doubtless due to the difference in age of the owner and tenant parents.
7. Almost 90 percent of the farm families in Brookings county received no public assistance during 1938.